JAYASHANKAR PRASAD
HIS MIND AND ART

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Ed Dr Nagendra

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Foreword

Jayashankar Prasad occupies a place of distinction in the galaxy of world poets—with Kalidas and Ravindra Nath in India and Dante and Milton in the West He was a man of multifacet genius and his Muse traversed with the same confidence and grace in the realms of drama fiction history and philosophy

Notwithstanding continued attacks on his skill in stage craft Prasad remains the tallest figure in Hindi Drama and excels his counterparts in other Modern Indian Languages in originality of thought and richness of emotive content The synthesis he effected between the Western concept of conflict and Indian theory of aesthetic bliss is his unique achievement in this field His novels are characterized by a keen philosophical analysis of the social problems of life in his times, a quality which the thoughtful reader misses in his great contemporary—the doyen of Hindi Fiction Many of his short stories are specimens of perfect art And lastly, his researches in poetic philosophy and ancient Indian History are monumental contribution to Indic studies

The plan of this volume was drawn a few years back but for several reasons it could not be executed My life long interest in and admiration for Prasad s literary personality however, would not permit me to forsake the idea and at an opportune time I resumed the work in right earnest with the help of a batch of distinguished scholars of Hindi and English literatures

The publication of a volume in English on a Hindi poet is a hazardous enterprize but I succeeded in availing of the willing cooperation of Messrs Prabhat Prakashan, Delhi—and I am glad to present this anthology (which covers all the major aspects of his creative genius) to the readers of Literature as my humble tribute to the author of *Kamayani* during his centenary year

134 Vaishali
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NAGENDRA

The Contemporary Literary Scene

PROF SHANTI SWARUP GUPTA

The father of renaissance in Hindi literature was Bharatendu Harishchandra The spirit and awakening which we find for the first time in the writings continued unabated till 1918 'Hindi, Hindu Hindustan' had become a living reality for the people Indians had united as never before to throw off the foreign yoke, they had realised that they were a nation with a common goal

With the advent of the renaissance poets began to look back to the past, to discover all that was noble and worthy in our heritage Their political struggle for freedom was a part of this awakening This struggle intensified after the First World War (1914-18) The indirect influence of war brought about deep and fundamental changes in modes of thinking and completely changed our social, moral and spiritual values It initiated a period of profound unrest and questioning The seeds of political consciousness developed into a vast foliage that spread over the entire national horizon A sense of unity began to dawn in the minds of the youngmen of the country The Rowlatt Act, the horrible massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh, the Khilafat Movement the Simon Commission, the Lahore Congress, the Round Table Conference, the Gandhi Irwin Pact—all contributed to the national upsurge The 1921 Satyagraha movement was the first declaration of war against the British imperialism Finding a new weapon in the form of non violent non-cooperation the Indians challenged the British authority The scene of political bondage abject poverty and social evils at home and the World War with all its destruction and moral degradation outside, transformed our entire outlook The Western style of education and Western literature had a deep impact on the Indian mind It not only led them to search for vulnerable spots in the present-day society but also created an urge to uproot degradation through social and religious reforms advocated by the Arya Samaja and other social and religious movements Thus the renaissance in Hindi literature was twofold On the one hand the Indians began to sing songs of their past glory and rich heritage and on the other they started deploring the artificial ways of life of the upper class

the social conventionalities of the old and the blind mimicry of the West by the new generation Rejecting the old traditional and ritualistic form of religion Gandhi, Aurobindo and Tagore advocated for religion based on morality spiritualism truth, unity in diversity and mutual tolerance

The individualistic doctrine of salvation came into conflict with the socialistic philosophy of mass existence We lost faith in old standards of morality which had failed hopelessly, our attitude towards sin underwent a change We became more tolerant of the individual s failings and realised the futility of imposing responsibility on God Thus the new political and social awakening sense of pride for the glorious past humanistic values, nationalism democratic ideals sense of equality and oneness spirit of service and self sacrifice all broadened the horizon of Hindi literature

The architect of the Romantic movement in Hindi is Jayashankar Prasad A romanticist is conscious of a supernatural world of wonder and mystery and he looks back towards the past The poets of this age like the poets of the Dvivedi era, were conscious of the bondage of slavery They wanted to rouse feelings of self respect and love for the country among their countrymen Therefore Nathu Ram Shankar Ram Naresh Tripathi and Maithilisharan Gupta sang songs of past glory expressed their woe over present social and economic thraldom exhorted the reader to rise above mutual feuds discard the bondages of ritualistic religion and unite to regain the past glory Prasad in his poems 'Peshola ki Pratidhvani and Sher Singh ka Shastra Samarpana presents two warrior patriots of the medieval history—Rana Pratap and Sher Singh and exhorts the countrymen to rise from the slumber of inaction to make their land free and powerful He has introduced many graceful scenes of the prosperous past and we are wonderstruck to observe the capacity, the courage and the valorous deeds of our great and heroic personalities of ancient India The difference between Maithilisharan Gupta and Prasad is that while the former sings songs exhorting the people directly to rise, the latter s emphasis is on our rich cultural heritage He is nearer to Rabindranath Tagore Inspired by Gandhi and his political movements a few poets wrote on contemporary political events and tried to invoke feelings of patriotism sacrifice and love for countrymen Gaya Prasad Shukla Sanehi s Rastriya Mantra (1921) Gokula Candra Sharma s Padya Pradip (1921) Hariaudha s Chaukhe Chaupade (1924) Maithilisharan

Gupta's 'Svadesh Sangit' (1925) and 'Hindu'—all are written on contemporary social and political problems, and aim at rousing the feelings of self dignity pride in the glorious past and blending of the ancient and the modern culture All these poems are written in the matter of fact, descriptive style, and lack emotive quality Classicism tends to order lucidity and proportion romanticism to freedom fancy and caprice Classicism is method romanticism is energy To Maithilisharan goes the credit of having roused the Indian youth from apathy His poems awakened in them the pride of achievement and nostalgia for the age of legendry valour Side by side another group of poets—Ram Naresh Tripathi Jaya shankar Prasad and Suryakant Tripathi Nirala were writing poems of national cultural values in a language and style called *Chhayavad* The language of these poems is emotive, rich in imagery and possesses great suggestive and pictorial power Ramadhari Singh 'Dinakar and Bal Krishna Sharma 'Navin contributed to this upsurge of nationalism by writing *Renuka, Humkar* and *Kumkuma* They are full of fiery emotion, the language used is full of vigour and the diction forceful

Thus the romantic poets of this age revolted against the matter of fact style and the extrovert outlook of the Dvivedi era but toeing the spirit of contemporary Renaissance advanced the wave of cultural awakening

The cultural spirit in the poetry of this age was more delicate and refined than that of the previous period Writing on the mythological and historical subjects the poets gave them a new colour and imbued them with fresh spirit Nirala s Yamuna ke Prati', Tulasidas and *Ram ki Shaktipuja*, Prasad's *Kamayani* are written with vigour, emotion and fresh cultural awareness

The poets of the Dvivedi era attached much importance to and laid great emphasis on advocating moral code through poetry For this they resorted to historical and mythological themes and presented noble and ideal characters, ended their poems with victory of the true over the false virtue over sin and thus preached self sacrifice dutifulness sympathy for the downtrodden condemning the social evils With the advent of romantic trends the current of this type of poetry slowly dried up The poets before the chhayavad painted gods as human beings the romantic poets raised ordinary men and women to the status of godhood Now the poets tried to relate society with nature and established humanitarian values on a

sublime plane The poets instead of exhorting the people to shun narrowmindedness and intolerance and analysing the social conditions in matter of fact style wrote on the relations of man and society in the light of universal brotherhood The *Jharna*[1] of Prasad (1918) and 'Manasi' (1927) of Ram Naresh Tripathi give first glimpse of this trend it however, matured in *Anamika* (1923) of Nirala and *Gunjan* (1932) of Sumitra Nandan Pant They have disclosed the beauty and tenderness of human heart and are keen to propagate human values through their poems

The third current consisted of revolutionary and violent poets like Bal Krishna Sharma Navin (Visarjana, 1938) and Anchal (Madhulika 1938) They are forebodings of the progressive poetry that came to full growth in the forties

The poets of the Dvivedi period had shed tears on the pitiable condition of woman in society, her agony, torture and exploitation Maithilisharan Gupta has expressed his full sympathy over the sad lot of the Hindu woman who spends her whole life either in feeding her babies or in shedding tears The romantic poets, on the other hand bring into light her qualities of head and heart On the one hand she is embodiment of self sacrifice devotion faithfulness and affection, and on the other, she has the capacity to fight to revolt and to destroy The romantic poet paints the Indian woman as a combination of Lakshmi and Durga, of Lady with the lamp and Joan of Arc Prasad in his poem Pralaya ki Chhaya does not approve of the spirit of self annihilation instead he exhorts the women to rise in revolt against the tyrannies Shraddha of *Kamayani* like Beatrice of Dante leads Manu on to the path of virtue spiritual equilibrium and lasting peace

In this age there were two distinct currents of devotional poetry On the one hand, a few poets continued to write poems after the style of their predecessors expressing their firm faith and deep devotion in the benevolence and munificence of the deity Except Mukutadhar Pandey, Ram Naresh Tripathi and Hariaudha who wrote in Khariboli all others wrote in Brajabhasa The other current more prominent and forceful was that of the poets of chhayavad school whose outlook and approach was a distinct change Curiosity to know the mysteries of the universe reflection of God in Nature, emotional attitude towards everything beautiful

[1]Spring

and pangs of separation are prominent features of their poetry The poems of 'Pallava' (1923) by Sumitranandan Pant, of 'Paraga' (1924) by Rupanarayan Pandeya and of 'Nihara (1924 28) by Mahadevi Verma seek to see God s glory in Nature, establish keen affinity between man and God through nature, and express deep agony at separation of soul from the Almighty Beauty, love and imagination play an important role in these poems The other poets who brought in mystic feelings in their poems are Prasad (Lahara, 1933), Nirala (Parimal 1929 & Gitika, 1936) and Ram Kumar Verma (Anjali 1930 Chandrakirana 1936) They are conscious of a supernatural world of wonder and mystery They conjure up vivid scenes of that mysterious universe Here the poet hungers for a world of wonder, mystery and spiritual beauty Spiritual contemplation, intellectual curiosity self surrender, lyricism and desire to know the mysteries of the universe are main features of this poetry We have the expression of a germinal Upanishadic idea the longing of the human spirit for the eternal and the universal in these poems

Under the influence of Mahavira Prasad Dvivedi the Hindi poets could not dare write poems of erotic sentiment The main emphasis was on moral tenets social reforms and nationalism But in the chhayavad period as a reaction to the trends in the previous age and because of the influence of the Romantic influence which pervaded the age Hindi poets specially Jayashankar Prasad started writing on love, its intoxicating power, exuberance of youth, and the irresistible power of beauty The pursuit of beauty dominates all his works Even in his Braj bhasa poems the subjects like Kalpna' Sukh' 'Manas and Nirav Prem' are new Nature in these poems serves not merely as an excitant but has been painted in various moods Erotic poetry here also assumes sublime heights

Prasad s portraits of youthful female body are unparalleled He has endowed youth with supernatural mysterious enchantment Romantic love deep agony during separation and various moods of lovers are the main themes of this poetry Pant Mahadevi and Bal Krishna Rao are other poets who depicted various moods and inner feelings of the love lorn hearts There is subjectivity and personal touch in these poems of love and beauty There are some collections of poems where pure platonic love has been depicted All these poets have used symbolic language for the portrayal of female beauty and finer feelings of love

To the poets of Dvivedi era Nature was a glorious spectacle, it served only as a background for the activities of man, but to the poets or this age she was a living power bringing calm solace and succour to our tormented souls The former poets were content with the mere description of single scenes in Nature or they transferred their own emotions to these scenes The Chhayavad poets think of Nature as a whole, treat of the active influence which she may exert on the mind and heart of man Nature to them is not merely a refuge from the turmoils of life, it is a living reality Like Wordsworth, these poets love the mountains for their spectacular glory Passion for the sounding cataract and craving for the deep and shady woods haunt them Nature fulfils his spiritual needs, awakens his inherent feeling for his own natural dignity These poets therefore, strive to capture and communicate the influence of nature on the human mind They invest lakes mountains cataracts, flowers and rivers with the light that never was on sea or land', give subtle and intimate interpretation to her activities To them Nature is an inexhaustible source of lovely imaginings and a great teacher The imaginative sensibility of these poets deepens their communion with nature

Thus, the new sensitiveness and accessibility to the influences of nature was the most pervasive and the most important feature of this new school It brought about a qualitative change in poetry of this age Portrayal of nature as such was hitherto conspicuous by its absence in Hindi poetry To the poetry of Chhayavad, Nature was a living entity Therefore they personified and deified it Nirala s 'Sandhya Sundari and 'Juhi ki Kali and Pant s Nauka Vihar are beautiful specimens

The poetry of this age was a sincere expression of a deep and rarest passion It was spontaneous overflow of strong feelings of the poets in whom we find a highly developed imaginative sensibility Their minds are sensitive to finest impressions Nirala defined poetry as the Queen of the world of imagination Prasad called it the life spirit and Pant called his poems as children of imagination

The foremost problem before the poets of the age was related to poetic diction They were in search of a language and an idiom through which they could express their tender emotions and finer sensibilities The poets of Dvivedi era had made Kharibolı the medium of poetry but it lacked capacity to express delicate feelings and intricate ideas These poets with courage and tenacity of pur

pose attempted to solve the problem and ultimately succeeded They brought about a revolution in form and style Matter of fact style and grossness of language was replaced by a diction known for its tenderness, melody and suggestiveness Like the English romantic poets these poets too described nature in symbolic manner and converted its objects into beautiful myths If Shelly compared west wind with ghosts from an enchanter fleeing and skylark with 'a poet hidden in the light of thought, Pant described cloud as a feeling of suspicion rising slowly or 'ignominy spreading far and wide or 'ambition crowding the heart'

The poetry of the four stalwarts of the Chhayavada period was often difficult to understand because it employed images, symbols and intricate metaphors Therefore a new trend of poetry led by poets like Harivansharai Bachchan sprang up Not rejecting the imaginative sensibility, Bachchan, Dinakar and Bhagavati Charan Verma were more realistic in their portrayal of feminine beauty and intense emotions The poet s emotional reaction to struggle and conflicts in life despair in love hopes and disappointments—all are there Imagination is there but palpable experience has replaced the aery and abstract concepts There is greater awareness and conscious attempt to depict life in true and healthy colours Their diction too is more simple and explicit

Though Kharibolı had been finally accepted as the language of poetry in bhasha Following the old tradition, an eminent poet like Ratnakar insisted on the use of Brajabhasha as a medium of his expression These Brajabhasa poets however, could not remain aloof from the strong wave of nationalism that swept the nation Therefore a few poets wrote on current national movements and thus fostering the spirit of patriotism

After the death of Bharatendu there appear signs of decadence in Hindi drama for which the contemporary political events—the First World War and its adverse effect on the economy of the country non cooperation movement of Gandhi and the absence of a pioneer personality like Bharatendu are responsible The social consciousness of the Bharatendu period and a desire to dramatize social problems are conspicuous by their absence No significant social, political and religious revolution took place in the Dvivedi age that could have impact on the dramatists The Parsee theatre still wielded influence on their writings Most of the dramas written in this age do not differ from those written in the preced-

ing age both in content, form and technique Thus, the contribu tion of this age to Hindi drama is almost nil

The most popular subjects which attracted the dramatists of the Dvivedi age were mythological Baladev Prasad Mishra and Maithilisharan Gupta—*Tilottama Chandrahas* and *Anagha*—wrote on mythological themes A few historical dramas like *Mirabai* and *Shankar Digvijaya* neither attempt to recreate the past, nor give a glimpse of the past glory they merely present ideal characters, nationalistic ideas and teach morals There was national consciousness among the dramatists but it could not go beyond social reforms Their sole aim was to teach moral lessons and to impart moral support to the freedom fighters In the preface to his drama *Sati Anusuya* Narayan Prasad 'Betab writes, 'The aim of this drama is to tell the audience that the path of duty and faithfulness is more virtuous and paying than the path of free and irresponsible love bordering on voluptuousness'

The Dvivedi era can rightly be called the 'Age of translation Many writers translated dramas of Sanskrit English and Bengali into Hindi Kaviratna Satyanarayan and Lala Sita Ram devoted themselves chiefly to this task Perhaps they wanted to place an ideal of drama—writing through these translations Badrinath Bhatt attempted to strike a balance between Eastern and Western techniques His *Kuruvan dahan* combines aesthetic pleasure (ras) with force of character He has cut short long and cumbersome dialogues of earlier dramas to suit the stage

In Dvivedi era one-act plays could not compete with short story Absence of proper stage was also responsible for its slow development Emphasis on moral teachings attempt to bring out social reforms through literature evil effect of Parsee theatre also retarded the progress of one act play Even after one decade of the end of the Dvivedi age old one act playwrights continued to write plays in the traditional style Thus during Dvivedi age Hindi drama stood still It could not achieve anything substantial This age has only historical importance because the influence of Arya Samaja and its ideology proved a big obstacle in the development of Hindi drama and stage Whenever the dramatists could detach themselves from this influence they gave us new and refreshing plays The dramas of Badrinath Bhatt Makhan Lal Chaturvedi Govind Vallabh Pant and the earlier dramas of Jayashankar Prasad are foreboding of the things to come One can

trace in them the fore showing of theme technique and language of the dramas to come There is no essential line of demarcation between the earlier dramas of Jayashankar Prasad and those written towards the end of Dvivedi age They clearly bear the impress of the moral emphasis and spirit of renaissance found in the dramas of the age

Fortunately as a reaction to the matter of-fact style and emphasis on moral values of the earlier period and as a result of the throbbing enthusiasm in the nation, there was upsurge of romantic movement which inspired the Hindi dramatists in the same way as it did the poets of the age It was the new dawn of a epoch in Hindi drama with writers imbued with the spirit of nationalism, romanticism and new literary consciousness As in the field of poetry Prasad was the founder of romanticism in drama as well

Jayashankar Prasad s romantic attitude towards life and literature prompted him to look back towards India s glorious past and evoked deep cultural consciousness in his dramas He painted contemporary situations and meditated upon the universal problems of life and attempted to find solutions for them in the context of past history He raised the burning social and political problems of his times in various perspectives Prasad had deep faith in traditional cultural values Most of the characters of his dramas belong to aristocratic world However, he has sensitively treated the burning social and political problems of his times in his plays His characters boldly face the odds of life and emerge victorious out of turmoils of life Thus he has expressed full confidence in the future of motherland and humanity at large The romantic idealism of his characters is invariably combined with moral values

Unlike the historical plays of the Dvivedi period nationalism in Prasad s dramas is not confined to singing songs of the chivalrous heroes of the past and the natural and material wealth of the country they point out our weaknesses and inspire us to shun them The glory and lustre of our motherland fills our heart with immense energy It instils in us new vigour and new life Nationalism combined with humanism and universal brotherhood make his dramas a thing of universal appeal Before Prasad Hindi drama aimed at either propaganda of nationalist ideals or mere entertainment Retrieving it from this sad position Prasad gave a new direction to Hindi drama In the construction of plot he combined music dance and comic scenes which before him were

either thrust from outside or dragged the play to a much lower level in the name of mass appeal His erudition deep study of Indian History, lyrical qualities, poetic imagery development and delineation of characters, a new dimension to the concept of tragedy greater reliance on words for creation of background and atmosphere than on scenic effects, political soliloquies which help in disclosing certain aspects of characters, the unison between the poet and the dramatist made Prasad a stalwart in the field of Hindi drama and went a long way in its development Besides Prasad others who wrote on historical themes and attempted to inculcate spirit of nationalism in the readers are Badrinath Bhatt (*Durgavati*), Govind Das (*Harsha*) Govind Vallabh Pant (*Raj Mukut*) Jagannath Prasad Milind (*Pratap Pratigya*) Udaya Shankar Bhatt (*Candragupta Maurya* and *Vikramaditya*), Candragupta Vidyalankar (*Ashok*) Hari Krishna Premi (*Rakshabandhan*) The authors of these dramas have tried to find peg for hanging their nationalist ideas and exhortations They were written either to sing the glory of Indian culture or to stress upon the need of religious and communal harmony In some the emphasis is on freedom from foreign yoke (*Shiva Sadhana*) But these dramas lack poetic qualities, serious philosophy national and cultural consciousness and epic grandeur which was the forte of Prasad Some of them may be more successful on the stage but as piece of literature they come nowhere near Prasad s works Prasad has captured new historical material for his themes He has infused a new life into the dull and dreary pages of history with the result that the pictures of the past appear vividly before our eyes

Prasad s *Dhruvaswamini* is a significant departure It deals with the relations of husband and wife and is designed for a realistic stage-presentation perhaps under the influence of Ibsen The author who was most influenced by Ibsen is however Lakshmi Narayan Mishra He breaks away from the style of Prasad in the treatment of the subject delineation of character as well as the mode of presentation Realism dominates his works His views are expressed in the preface to his drama *Sanyasi* We need characters whose hearts pulsate in unison with ours in whose joys and sorrow grief and happiness we may get what we want or what we crave for but do not get anywhere However progressive and enlightened his views may be in practice he does not seem to be dynamic The characters are predetermined and do not seem to

grow to their logical culmination in the course of the play His understanding of the technique of Ibsen and Shaw is superficial National movement problems of administration and education, guiles of the politicians and social reformers have come up in the plays but they do not constitute components of the whole pattern. They appear to be problems thrust from without, a camouflaged idealism lurks behind sermonisation and quick ready made solutions prevail Thus Mishra has adopted only the format of a realistic play

On social themes were written two kinds of plays—one by scribes of professional companies and the other by the litterateurs The former depicted sequences which were anti evil but the dance sequences and drinking bouts were the main attractions The latter wrote on the problems connected with the farmer landlord police, rights of women and inter caste marriage Here too the social reformer and the idealist overpowers the dramatist Therefore the end comes as something forced from without

A number of plays called 'Prahasan were also written during this period Some of the authors are—G P Srivastava, Govind Vallabh Pant and Badrinath Bhatt All the plays are satires on the prevalent system The craft of creating humour through dramatic situation is lacking

Jayashankar Prasad started writing plays with four one act plays—*Sajjan Kalyani Karunalaya* and *Prayashchit* (1910 14) He has followed Sanskrit dramaturgy with benediction (Nandi), Sutradhar Nati and Bharatavakya However the one act plays in Hindi written in thirties are an outcome of the impact of the West *Ek Ghunt* (1929) is the first serious attempt in this direction From 1935 to 1942 one act plays made their appearance in various journals Several collections of one act plays by different authors also appeared Besides Bhuvaneshvar Prasad s *Karavan* (1935) and Ganesh Prasad Dvivedi s *Suhag bindi* (1935) several plays by Govind Das and Upendra Nath Ashka also came into light Dr Ram Kumar Verma and Sudarshan also contributed to this genre Except for a few plays by Dr Verma and Ashka the main bulk only provides the stages of development, they do not indicate any achievement

The link between written plays and their production on the stage had been snapped This break had a curious side effect Many people turned to translations rather than original play writing Plays

translated from Sanskrit, English (Shakespeare and Galsworthy), Bengali (Tagore D L Roy) French and Marathi made their debut

It is a pity that the contemporaries of Prasad were not inspired by his creativity It is possible that the impact of his plays acted as a deterrent to other playwrights The other factor responsible for the sad state of affairs was the absence of satisfactory theatrical conditions and the confusion of models There were the old Sanskrit plays, Bengali plays by D L Roy and Girish Chandra bad imitations of European tragedy and comedy plays written for professional Parsee theatrical companies and plays of Shakespeare, Shaw Moliere and Ibsen In the face of such conflicting influence, Hindi writers were at a loss to decide about one pattern It was difficult for them to decide how to design their own works

Hindi fiction was practically non existent when Prem Chand appeared on the scene His *Sevasadan* was the first real modern literary novel with vivid character studies and interesting side lights thrown on the problems of our domestic social, economic and religious life Prem Chand had a powerful grasp of the mind and manners of the people His novels depict the conditions of life and labour of the teeming millions of our countryside Without making a fetish of it he gave us as subtle and acute glimpses into the process of thought underlying the conduct and activities of his characters To him literature was not merely a game of dissipation He thought that if there is room for idealism in life equally there is room for idealism in literature He wrote with evident enthusiasm about a righteous act a disinterested act of self sacrifice His disciple Vishvambhar Nath Kaushik does not depend upon the external importance of incidents and characters He regarded fidelity to oneself and one s experiences as the condition of good literature and was content to write upon two or three inches of ivory He is in the hands of his characters they take him where they please Shri Nath Singh and Siyaram Sharan are other prominent novelists of this school

Professor Moulton while discussing the moral systems of Shakespeare has said that Shakespeare did not write his dramas to prove any thesis or convey any lesson he actually presented a vast body of creative observations in human life The same can be said of Jayashankar Prasad His *Kankal* and *Titali* are bodies of creative observations He maintains that the individual built society and community for self protection only to find himself a slave of his own

creations The tentacles of the octapus are fast spreading and the individual is being crushed under social ordinances *Kankal* exhibits the skeleton of society with its tentacles, Deva Niranjan and Mangal Dev preying upon Tara and Kishori In *Titali* he comes out of monasteries and manorial houses and breathes in the open air of meadows and fields In both the novels woman is the victim, in *Kankal* she is prey to the lust and lasciviousness of man, in *Titali* she sticks to the hearth and the home and derives strength from her love Prasad s cultural outlook and romanticism make him different from Prem Chand's realism Those who are romantic in their approach to life are Nirala Bhagavati Charan Verma and Ushadevi Mitra

The historical novelists of this age, Vrindavan Lal Verma and Rahul Sankrityayan brought their creative imagination to bear upon the past and out of a mess of scattered material gleaned from a variety of sources evolved a picture having the fullness and unity of a work of art Jayashankar Prasad in his *Iravati* tried to represent faithfully the manners, tone and temper of the Shunga age (185 73 B C) but unfortunately he could not complete it Vrindavan Lal Verma in his historical romances rehabilitating the past, described the heroic exploits of the Bundela chiefs and people Rahul s novels are important chiefly for the wealth of historical material used and erudition displayed Bhagavati Charan Verma in his famous *Chitralekha* has developed Goldsmith s thesis that that single effort by which we stop short in the downhill path to perdition, is of itself a greater exertion of virtue than a hundred acts of justice He challenges the old concept of virtue To him celibacy is a freak of civilisation Kumar Giri who had supported a course of undeviating rectitude so long at once slips when he comes in close contact with the dancer Chitralekha On the other hand the renunciation of Bijagupta is born of plenty, not out of want or compulsion

The advocates of realism cry hoarse in telling us that the only business of the novelist is to go direct to actual life and reproduce it with photographic fidelity The doctrine of realism is often shamefully abused It is made to justify detailed pictures of the sordid, base and ugly life The chief concern of these writers is the elaboration of the trivial and the commonplace The cross section of life that attracts them most is the life of the brothel house and the exploited Hindu widow Novelists like Rishabh Charan Jain, Chatursen Shastri and Pandeya Bechan Sharma 'Ugra have

drawn filthy pictures of life that have done more to poison the mind of the adolescent than cure our body politic of its evils

Jainendra had started writing fiction during the life time of Prem Chand Like Prem Chand and Prasad he would not tolerate any violent attack from outside on the citadel of society Reform has got to come from within His heroines suffer at the hands of society so that others may learn and live well Faith in the essential goodness of human nature is nowhere forsaken He is indirectly influenced by Western psychology That is why his characters are introvert and suffer from psychosis or neurosis

Thus by the end of 1937 Hindi novel was not only popular but also one of the richest branches of Hindi literature

In the field of short story also the two trends noted above—realism and romanticism—occur side by side Prem Chand represented the former and Prasad presented the latter The stories of Prem Chand present life, its problems and characters as they are found in day to day life Prasad an introvert by nature wrote stories surcharged with emotion and inner conflict of the soul They are lyrical in character While Prem Chand weaves on organic plot in his stories Prasad concentrates on emotive situations characterisation and atmosphere which serve as a fitting backdrop to the intense conflict of the heart The stories written on historical themes in this period lean more to the art of Prem Chand than to that of Prasad

The poets of the Chhayavada school were critics too Jayashankar Prasad in his memorable essays *Kavya aur Kala tatha anya Nibandh* Sumitra Nandan Pant through his valuable introductions to his collections of poems and Mahadevi through her prefaces and literary essays threw new light on literary problems They were exponders of mystico romantic aesthetics and were highly conscious of the bonds that link the poet s soul with the realm inside As in the field of creative literature here too the critics were fascinated by foreign ideals and theories of the West Only Ram Chandra Shukla adhered to the eternal values of art propounded and reinterpreted them in the light of modern psychology and aesthetic theories to suit the demands of the age

A Life-Sketch

DR VISHVA NATH MISHRA

There is a clear dichotomy between Prasad's daily life and the one that found expression in his literature We are reminded of Hulme s worlds ' The business of the poet is not personal expression, but craft [1] and of Eliot s well known dictum "Poetry is not turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion, it is not expression of personality but an escape from personality " In his literary formulations Prasad also advocated this escape from personality ideal and categorically stated An artist s art and not his person is the touchstone to assess his work it is only after losing his personality that he emerges in his art as an artist [3]

But can a literary artist or poet be creative when he has completely lost his personality?

How far is the expression of personality possible in literature? Prasad himself has given the answer Considering the examples of Valmiki and Vyas he holds, one cannot but ditto the statement 'The sparks of literature arise from one s own ashes [4] Prasad was an avowed romantic Such a genius tends to express in his writings his own passions and emotions He sees life not as it is, but sees it through the spectacles of his feelings and fancies Life in his writings appears dressed in new colours To quote Hudson, Literature is expression of life as life shapes itself in the mind of the interpreter ' [5] In Prasad's works—his poems short stories, novels, dramas etc —what emerges is life as shaped in the writer s innerself by his emotions fancies dreams reveries His writings are a record not of outer reality but of the artist s inner world As such, for a proper appreciation and understanding of his works more emphasis needs be placed on the working of his mind than the events of his day to day life

Prasad was born in a renowned family of Varanasi His grand father Shiv Ratan Sahu a dealer in high quality perfumed tobacco (snuff) was popularly known as 'Soongahni Sahu —'soonghani being the Hindi word for snuff Besides being an astute businessman, he was endowed with a marked cultural taste His home was the meet-

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ing place of local poets, singers artists, scholars and men of religion One day it was poetry recitation next day it was discussion on some current subject, third day it could be a talk on some religious topic And so it went on Literary taste and cultural consciousness got reflected in his daily dealings as well He was ever ready to help anyone in distress and had earned a name for his generosity Prasad s father Devi Prasad Sahu carried forward this high tradition of family Prasad therefore had a chance to study the various phases of human nature in the light of the business traditions, artistic taste and religious background of his family

Prasad was born at Varanasi on 30th January 1889 His ancestors were devotees of Lord Shiv From Vaidyanath Dham of Jharakhand to the Mahakal of Ujjain the blessings of the Lord had been sought for the birth of a male child So when he was born, Prasad was given the name Jayashankar (Hail Lord Shiv) Symptoms of literary temper had begun to appear in him at quite an early age even at the *annaprashan* ceremony when he wae barely four months old At this ceremony the baby tastes staple food for the first time Often milk rice (kheer) is placed before him in a gold or silver utensil The elders also place around him colourful toys, sweets as well as a book a ledger an ink pot and a pen The child is coaxed to pick one of the items Thus coaxed little Prasad lifted the pen[6]—which in years to come he was destined to hold with such dexterity

From his early childhood, Prasad had to travel a lot First he was taken to Vaidyanath Dham in Jharakhand for his Nam karan samskar (christening ritual) He was given the name Jayashankar Prasad and as the ceremony took place in Jharakhand, he was also nick named Jharakhandi When five years old he possibly for some other ritual was taken to Jaunpur and later to Vindhyachal Originally Prasad s family belonged to Kannauj From there they shifted to Jaunpur and lastly to Kashi (Varanasi) where they finally settled down Might be he was taken to Jaunpur because it was an old ancestral place There he saw the temple of Shitala Devi To Vindhyachal he went probably to seek the blessings of another deity—Vindhyavasini Devi At that impressionable age the scenic beauty of the Vindhyas left its mark upon his mind In *Chitradhar* an anthology of his earliest poems we come across many a glimpse of the natural beauty of the Vindhyas—the grand cut of their peaks their water falls and rivulets etc At the tender age of nine again Prasad had to go (this time) on a pretty long

pilgrimage which included Chitrakut, Naimisharanya, Mathura, Omkareshwar, Dharakshetra and Ujjain The mountainous beauty of Chitrakut, the thick forests of Naimisharanya, the green fields of Mathura the hills of Amarakantak, the clear waters of the Narmada etc , must have cast their spell upon the child's young mind This deep love of nature that we come across in almost all his works is (rightly) attributed to these strange experiences of his early life

Prasad s elders took keen interest in his education Private tutors were engaged to teach him Hindi, Sanskrit, English and Persian Among his early teachers, Sohan Lal deserves a special mention He used to compose verses under the pseudonymn, 'Rasamayasiddha' He not only familiarised Prasad with the major literary classics in Sanskrit but also helped in igniting his poetic talents Prompted by him Prasad composed his maiden poem at the age of nine [7]

One of his friends Vishvambhar Nath 'Jijja' has testified that even at the age of 8 9, Prasad had learnt by heart the entire *Amarakosh* and *Laghusiddhant Kaumudi* [8] For formal education he was admitted to the Queen's College, but this arrangement did not work well and he was compelled to pursue higher studies at his home

Catastrophies started invading Prasad quite early in life His father died when he was only eleven Family responsibility fell on the young shoulders of Prasad s elder brother Shambhu Ratan Family fueds led to litigation Distribution of property took place under the court's supervision The family trade suffered Shambhu Ratan worked hard to put the business again on rails It might be under these circumstances that Prasad was forced to leave the Queen s College So his formal education could not continue beyond the 8th standard He had to sit at the shop

As we have seen he had started composing verses at the age of nine Now he would scribble verses on the account books It caught the sight of his brother who first tried to wean him away and later even chastised him At such occasions his Bhabhi (brother s wife) came to his rescue Meanwhile, another terrible tragedy occurred in the family Prasad s mother expired She had seen good days Family feuds seemed to have told upon her health resulting in her death Misfortune never comes alone When Prasad was 17, Shambhu Ratan also met an untimely death The entire burden fell on the adolescent poet

Prasad s friend Dr Rajendra Prasad Sharma is said to have told some research scholar that Prasad s inner self was inspired by Lord Krishna, whereas in his social dealings he put before himself the ideal of Lord Rama, the Maryadapurushottam (the highest ideal of social equity)[9] During that trying period of his life, these twin sources of inspiration helped Prasad a lot He was a poet, but he had to look after his family, as well as the family trade With Lord Rama as his ideal he would discharge his social responsibilities At the same time his poetic self that treasure house of tender emotions and aesthetic sensibilities continued to derive inspiration from Krishna and he kept on creating literature These two currents flowed parallel all through his life Though an idealist, he was endowed with an astute business acumen He started paying more and more attention to his family business of snuff or perfumed to bacco He would personally look after its manufacturing At the same time he had to make proper arrangements of boarding and lodging for customers coming from out stations His tireless labour and superb managing skill yielded rich fruits Within two to three decades the firm was not only debt free but also earned immense goodwill in business circle All along the artist in Prasad had been alive, nay active—amazingly so

Prasad, as has already been mentioned started composing at the age of nine Thereafter he began to take active part in the poetry sessions and 'samasyapurtis held at his own household Samasya purti was a replica of the courtly poetic traditions of medieval times A line of poetry is given to the contestants and they are called upon to complete a metrical composition ending on that particular line Of course, it was a kind of mental gymnastics Prasad took part in it quite enthusiastically Once he is on record to have composed an ashu kavita or instant poem [10] When nearly 15 he wrote Urvashi-champu based on Kalidas s famous drama *Vikramorvashiyam* After the death of his brother in 1906 Prasad side by side with looking after his family trade, launched upon the publication of his writings His first poem was published in the *Bharatendu* At that time he used to write in Brij Bhasha under the pen name Kaladhar Khari boli had not yet established its creden tials as a fit medium for poetic expression Ayodhya Singh Upadh yaya 'Hariaudh and Maithilisharan Gupta had yet to come out as recognised poets of Khari boli

When the business had somewhat recovered, Prasad planned the

publication of a literary journal At his instance one of his relatives Ambika Prasad started the *Indu* The inaugural number appeared in July 1909 By this time Prasad s notions of literature had crystal lised into a credo In the first issue of *Indu*, he proclaimed, "Literature has no fixed aim it is not slave to rules, it is free and all embracing genius gives birth to genuine literature which is subservient to none Whatever in the world is true and beautiful is its subject matter By dealing with the True and the Beautiful it establishes the one and affects the full flowering of the others Its force can be measured by the degree of pleasure it gives to the reader s mind as also by criticism which is free of all prejudice' [11] The words sound like the manifesto of romanticism in literature A romantic believes in the free expression of his inner experience None knew it better than Prasad He further writes "Hindi possesses the beauty of a spring garden, but the inter play of waves in a deep boundless ocean is not to be seen here the crying need is poems that are moving exciting and capable of making us forget ourselves ' [12] Prasad saw the foreign pen taking root in the native soil of India Even so he declared Indian literature shall ever remain Indian

From Prasad s aesthetics it can also be deduced that he was not averse to the ideal of the propagation and expression of truth and beauty through literature To vindicate this view he wrote in the April 1912 issue of the *Indu* ' With all his beautiful similitude verbal jugglery and figurative tricks a poet whose pen has done nothing for the welfare of the people cannot be treated at par with one who through his writings is dedicated to the ideal of inspiring every segment of society and infusing a new life into it [13]

Even while recognising the social relevance of literature Prasad insisted, The poet is a creater he is not conditioned by his milieu, rather it is he who moulds it and gives it a new shape, he conjures up a new world of beauty where the reader for the time being, becomes oblivious of the outer world and passes his time in an eternal spring garden where golden lotuses blossom and the air is thick with pollen [14] Thus the chief aim of literature according to Prasad is to give joy to the reader and to create a state of bliss in him Later under the impact of Shaivadvaitism this faith of Prasad got further strengthened

After he succeeded in restoring order to his household and family trade Prasad decided to marry From such narrative poems as

Prem Pathik, and 'Prem Rajya it is pretty clear that at this stage Prasad had been hit by Cupid s Golden Arrow He was burning to make someone his own and loose himself into someone So he entered into wedlock But misfortune was at his heels His wife died and he was left alone At his Bhabhi's insistence, he re married The earlier tregedy repeated itself Prasad again lost his spouse Such mishaps were bound to leave their mark on his tender and sensitive heart The man who could write a moving alegy Shokochhvas on an emperor (Edward VII) dying across the seven seas could not remain silent at his own personal loss Poems like Vismrit Prem and Dalit Kumudini bear witness to this fact They served as a catharsis to ease his heavy lovelorn heart

Prasad was a theist and believed in the worship of divine forces At one place he wrote 'In hours of dejection, agitation and sorrow, the cool moon shine of devotion will provide you with solace When in trouble weep at the feet of Him who is a sure refuge to the shelterless These tears will put balm on all your wounds [15] Understandably it was this devotional faith that brought peace to Prasad s deeply distressed mind at that time

When the Ram of Prasad was braving the outer storm of adverse circumstances the Krishna in his inner self was giving him support all along. The opening lines of one of his songs are

> Caught in a storm of battling noises
> Say what you want to say, my heart !

meaning thereby even when the outer world is an arena of deafening noises feverish activities and warring interests, one should seek peace in his soul and hear only 'the still small voice within' that is what Prasad did What he wrote during those days is proof enough Almost all the literacy pieces of this period were published in the *Indu* which became as it were an authentic record of this important phase of the poet s inner life

Kalidas had been a major influence on Prasad *Urvashi Champu* was clearly inspired by *Vikramorvashiyam* Van Milan small narrative poem is based on the legend of *Abhijnanashakuntalam* It was youth time and the first sign was the sprouting of the mighty passion of love So Prasad wrote romantic narratives like 'Prem Pathik and Prem Rajya It is clear that the poet far from confining himself to the prison walls of his individual cell, tried to be one

with the Universal His 'Prem Pathik (Love's Pilgrim) does not aspire to lie and luxuriate inside some royal palace He is a farer of the road where all other paths end

Prasad had fought the Mahabharat of his life That ancient epic irresistably attracted his attention Based on an episode from the *Mahabharat* he wrote a drama entitled *Sajjan* At this stage he took more interest in lyrical than in narrative poetry In the lyrics composed at this stage, he is seen now seeking solace in the lap of mother Nature now losing himself in natural beauty Occasionally he also had had mystic experience in the midst of natural objects It is clear from the poetic pieces, that the poet was all the time struggling to come out of the narrow cell of his inner self and be one with the vast universe Several of them reflect his devotional feelings as well In this sphere instead of pinning his faith on a godhead with name and shape, Prasad continued to nurse the belief in this world, as the temple of the living God By and by he seems to have succeeded in feeling God's presence in all objects animate and inanimate[16]

During these trying days, Prasad wrote some prose pieces too Short stories like 'Brahmarishi and 'Panchayat' were inspired by scriptural episodes Later on he truned to real human beings around him Under this impulse of this wordly consciousness, we find him writing a short story like 'Gram (The Village) In several of his essays he advocated his faith in an aesthetic which is romantic and which loves beauty, without neglecting this world In one of Prasad s essays, we see him paying rich tributes to the beauty and grandeur of nature All this goes to prove that adverse circumstances aroused in Prasad an awareness more of this world rather than of the other

At one place Prasad makes his Koma aver ' Love is like the *festival of Diwali Once in his life, everyone celebrates it you too* must have seen the carnival of light where one heart is attracted to another broadens and gladly sacrifices one s all [17] These intoxicating moments come in the lives of even great nation builders men of action men who make history Says Chanakya in *Chandragupta* My simple heart was anxious for a companion each new acquaintance made me curious and I was perpared to loose all I had [18] In Kamana Prasad made an admission of the arrival of this sweet spell to his own life "On this slippery soil where fall spells wisdom where life seeing the ecstatic realisation of its unful

filled dreams, starts flowing at full speed through the veins where all worries are laid to rest I saw thee the eternal woman in thy full glory And I was overwhelmed [19] These lines read like a page of the poet s private diary *Ansu* (Tears) is an account of this affair that left its permanent mark on the poet's psyche

It is rather difficult to say anything in all too certain terms about this unfulfilled love affair Prasad was all the time so much engrossed in it that he would say nothing in response to his friends' repeated requests Yet besides *Ansu* several other pieces are as it were an indirect confession of this affair Many poems in *Jharana* can be referred to in this connection In one of them he says

> Cruel to myself I gave my all to ye
> Ye allowed a moment not for love, but for mercy [20]

Probably it was this great beauty whom he is seeing and treating in the following words

> Come and be the light of my eyes [1]

Still more authentic a confession we come across in a poem entitled 'Autobiography which he wrote at the request of Prem Chand and which was published in the autobiography number of *Hans* [2] I know not how to sing about those many splendoured hours how to re create before you the experiences of those honeyed moments how to relate the many pranks love jokes and love talks with that ever smiling wonder Those blissful moments will never again return to me Alas! even when I was trying to take her into my arms she vanished like a phantom and I was left like one waking from a lovely dream About this love affair much can be deduced from *Ansu* also However this is not the proper place for all that

Somehow Prasad stood the trauma of this unfulfilled love Here the philosopher in him came to his help Life is an endless tale of shocks and thrills Perhaps he was feeling too lonely His Bhabhi had all along been persuading him to marry She for him a mother figure Prasad married once more and this marriage proved lucky enough He was blessed with a son whom we know today by the name of Ratna Shankar Stability returned to Prasad s life and he began to devote regular time to creative writing First of all he

voiced (in *Aansu*) the pangs of unfulfilled love, gathering in his heart for so many long years When his heart was somewhat unburdened, he wrote his dramatic masterpieces—*Skandagupta*, *Chandragupta* and *Dhruvasvamini* The frightful realities of life prompted him to write *Kankal* (The Skeleton) Reality and fancy joined hands to create the colourful picture of life in *Titali* (The Butterfly) The vicissitudes of life inspired the various short stories in *Andhi* (The Storm) Uncommon female characters like Champa and Madhulika appeared in stories collected in the *Akash Deep* (The Light House) He dealt with mazes and chimeras of this world in *Indrajal* (The Mystic Maze), an when he was telling the tale of Iravati he went to sleep from which he never arose *Kamayani* is the crown and creed of Prasad s literary career to that we will revert a little later

Side by side with organising his family trade and literary schedule Prasad also began to lead a disciplined life Early morning he would set out to walk on the banks of the Ganga If time on hand was short, he would stroll in the Benia Bagh where Prem Chand often met him These two literary giants were great friends Back home, Prasad would take some exercises In his young years he used to be a wrestler After exercise he would sit down to write This took one to two hours He would get up only when the family priest came to him with 'belpatra flowers and arghyajal Thereafter he would take bath pray and then go to the shop which was situ ited in the Narial Bazar somewhere between the Chowk and Dal Mandi He dealt in snuff scent and toilet goods He himself used to look after his workshop He was an expert hand at his trade So the firm enjoyed great goodwill Even at the shop, he would scribble some lines whenever he had time on hand By evening a crowd assembled on the raised platform in front of his shop Besides literary discussion many were the topics discussed there 'Beauties sitting in balconies also enjoyed these friendly assemblies Prasad used to be just spectator or listener He wrote somewhere It is better if I listen to what others say and keep my lips sealed [3] Hashish (bhang) taking was also a usual feature of this evening get-together Prasad would not accept hashish He would point towards his heart That indicated that there was already intoxication enough so no hashish was needed The proverbial masti (glee) of Banaras was his by nature

Barring these gatherings in the evening near his shop Prasad was

never attracted towards functions or meetings Nor did he have any liking for kavi sammelans (poetry reciting sessions) Only once when the Nagari Pracharini Sabha celebrated the publication of its dictionary Prasad had hyptonised the audience with the recital of the Lajja canto of *Kamayani* Similarly, at the annu function of the Moolgandh Kuti Vihar of Sarnath he recited hi poem Varuna ke Shant Kachhar (The Silent Banks of Varuna) specially written for this occasion The concept of Madhyam Pratipada (Golden mean) of Buddhism that stressed the need of a synthesis of head and heart was Prasad s favourite Sometimes he would amuse himself with boating in the Ganga His friends have testified that at such occasions he used to recite his own poems By nature cheerful Prasad led an unusually active life action was his passion That was why the ups and downs of life could never deter him He not only studied the ideal of bliss (Anand) propounded in Shaivadvaitism but had also translated it into his life

Prasad was a staunch believer in shaping life through action He had firm faith in the efficacy of woman to play a great role in the re generation of mankind He is all for seeing woman breaking her age old shackles and proclaim independence When Cornelia put this question to Suvasini What do you think of a married women? the latter replied— No more than a show piece of the rich—a truncated tree If some branch grows in abandon, it is axed to size There you stand pruned and dolled up by the gardener [24] *Dhruva svamini* is a voice of protest against the sorry state of affairs a call to liberate one self from the grip of incompatible conjugal relations Prasad held that woman with the natural sublimity of the nature is to bring as she can tenderness to the life of man who is by nature rugged callous cruel She has to be the harbinger of a new culture [5] It is exactly this role that Shraddha plays in the life of the freedom loving Manu

Mahadevi Verma visited Prasad when he was engaged in the writing of *Kamayani* This meeting is considered memorable because what Mahadevi later on wrote about Prasad throws a flood of light on one of the most important aspects of his personality [6] Both poets talked about *Kamayani* Prasad clarified that there was little flexibility in the vedic myths of Indra and Varuna He chose the legend of Manu and Shraddha for it was elastic enough and he could easily convey his message through it Mahadevi came back convinced After some time when she heard of the shocking news

of Prasad s ailment and subsequent death due to tuberculosis, she concluded that Prasad instead of going in for an expensive treatment preferred to stay at Kashi, so that his son, still a minor, might not face adverse circumstances as he himself had once been forced to face [27] One is irresistibly reminded of the example of the Mughal Emperor Babar, who had invoked death to spare the life of his son and take his own instead

Prasad s sublime vision merits some more words *Kamayani* is the very acme of his poetic career It is his *magnum opus* It is a saga of a new creation, after an all devastating deluge At one level, this is just a series of episodes skilfully strung together, that how ever is not all The most important change Prasad wrought in, is in the last part of the narrative Prasad always held that at the root of all disorder in the life of the modern man is his fractured psyche His will is ever at war with his thoughts and thoughts with his action The crying need is a synthesis of these three—Will, Thought and Action This synthesis alone will give birth to the new man and a new world order Of course it is a moot point, as his own contemporary, Pant has pointed out in his essay 'If I Wrote *Kamayani* This is not the place to elaborate this contro versial point One thing is certain, when Prasad bade adieu to this world on 14th November 1937, he had had the satisfaction of giving through his writings his message to the world He had ful filled his life s mission

Reminiscing about Prasad s grand personality Mahadevi has compared it to the tall pine tree, growing straight on the slope of the Himalayas vying comparison with their proud, ice capped peaks [28] This sublime and uncommon aspect of Prasad's persona lity is amply manifested in his writings Mark what Devsena says to Vijaya in *Skandagupta*— Have you ever seen on some lovely winter morning a coral tree (Parijat) laden with flowers standing all alone on a solitary hillock? It does not resemble other trees It sings its own tune The south wind tremulous with the unique music of its flower dust The buds blossom it claps it dances it sings Who else sees all this who else hears but itself ? The life force is piping at the red ripe of its heart Listen in what delicate tone it carols

Under the dark shadow of Love s eternal tree

Sit a while and take refuge from the world s scorching heat [29]

Prasad s person and his literary works are like a huge shady tree that provides and shall ever continue to provide us shelter from the scorching heat which is our lot in our journey through life

Prasad possessed a grand and imposing personality a proud lofty forehead a face flanked on either side by dark silken locks broad shoulders, strong arms, hands as if ever eager to do something—the entire person spelt action The amazing thing about Prasad was that strong business sense never became a hindrance in the way of his literary preoccupation nor did literary pursuits ever ill affected commercial dealings As we have said in the very beginning there was a world of difference between his daily life and life as reflected in his works Credit goes to him for harmonising these twin and rather mutually opposite aspects of his personality That is why he could in spare moments scribble poems on the blank pages of the account books and could thrill anyone with his emotional fervour as much as he could spellbound him with his literary diction To this rare personality, this man of uncommon brilliance this dynamo of action this harmonious bland of contraries our salutations a hundred thousand times !

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Literary Corpus—A Chronological Study

DR N C SEHGAL

The literary corpus of Jayashankar Prasad is rich in magnanimity, as well as in magnitude In all he has bequeathed to Hindi literature a variegated patrimony of poetical works plays short stories novels and essays

Poems

The early poems of Jayashankar Prasad (1906 15) are in Braj Bhasha They reveal his artistic aptitude and an intense love for nature The early poems composed in Khari boli are mainly devotional They deal with external subjects Some of them e g Chitrakut Bharat and Kurukshetra are short narratives depicting mythological or historical themes Khari boli poems composed between 1909 17 were later (in 1939) published under the title *Kanan Kusum*

Prem Rajya (1910) is a small narrative poem dealing with the battle between Suryaketu the King of Vijayanagar and the Muslim Sultan of the Bahmani dynasty The later half of the poem depicts the love affair of prince Chandraketu and Lalita It has thus valour and eros as the chief sentiments Prem Rajya was later incorporated in *Chitradhar*

Prem Pathik appeared in 1913 It was first composed in Braj Bhasha (1905) About eight years later it was revised enlarged and given its present form – a metrical narrative composed in unrhymed Khari boli It is a charming love idyl It depicts the serenity and grandeur of the pastoral life But above all it deals with the union separation and re union of two young lovers—Kishor and Chameli As such it is a tale of terrestrial love culminating in celestial love The reunited lovers decide to dedicate themselves to the humanity which is no different from its Creator They now desire to pass the remaining days of their lives like the river passing over the path of life leading to the Great Ocean – the Abode of Eternal Bliss

Maharana ka Mahattva (1914) is a historical narrative delineating the greatness of Maharana Pratap who shows exemplary regard for the wife of his avowed enemy The poem was first published in

the *Indu* in 1914 It was brought out in its present book form in 1928

Ansu (1925 26) is one of the mature works of Jayashankar Prasad The first edition (1925) contained only 252 lines but the present edition contains 380 lines The first edition was mostly an expression of personal grief, the second (present) edition witnesses this grief turned into the longing for the welfare of the whole universe

Ansu is a sweet and solemn song of separation Chanting the notes of love, beauty, union separation and thoughtful meditation it culminates into a state where the tear is turned into the dew drop that softens the hardship of life The poet remembers the days of happiness He weeps and pines for the same He is, as it were, engulfed in the sea of sorrow His heart burns and the tears add fuel to this fire Gradually the poet surmounts the worldly weak nesses The sorrow is sublimated and the poem puts on a mystic veil *Ansu* is thus, the revelation of the poet s grief, ennobled and exalted to unprecedented heights The lyrics composed in 'Anand' metre are enshrined in a style which is essentially the poet s own

Jharana in its present form, was published in 1927 Its first edit ion, containing twenty five poems was brought out as early as August, 1918 It now contains forty eight poems composed between 1914 21 Besides, it has a dedication in verse and also a poem entitled 'Parichaya', wherein the poet beautifully designed his relationship with the Muse 'Jharana, the first poem of this collection is not only an excellent piece of Nature poetry, it also hints at something deeper—something spiritual It is followed by forty seven poems They deal with a variety of subjects For instance, the poem entitled 'Avyavasthit delineates a perplexed and astonished mind Whenever an attempt is made to control and con centrate it to pray it is baffled by the enchanting sound of the anklet, called ambition Do Bunden contains two small poems of eight lines each about two drops One of these drops is the Moon that spreads its silvery rays to enliven this earth and the other drop is treasured in the pollen of the small flower which attracts the black bee 'Pavas Prabhat' describes the dawn following a rainy night In 'Vasant ki Pratiksha the lover prepares a bed of flowers and waits for the spring when he will have his beloved by his side Vasant equates love with the spring 'Kiran is not merely a link between the earth and the heaven it is also a messenger of an

unknown world—an emissary of the Abode of Love and Bliss Vishad sweetens sorrow and eulogizes it as a stream of solace In 'Balu ki Bela, the dryness of the sand (of life) is washed away by the incessant flood of love 'Deep presents, through romantic symbols, the performance of a small lamp amidst scathing darkness 'Bikhara hua Prem is a song of the heart broken up by despair Kab reveals the poet s anxiety about the probable time when his heart will once again be clouded with love leading to the fulfil ment of all his desires 'Svabhav provides a peep into the true nature of the lover 'Asantosh' decries discontentment 'Kaho Nivedan and 'Pyasa are the outpourings of the lover s heart In 'Pi Kahan the poet narrates his own love pangs through cuckoo and chatak Pain Bagh' and Pratyasa are the songs of hope and anticipation Tum is an invocation of Atman 'Holi ki Rat conveys the message of love and peace 'Jhil men' enshrines, in vivid images, the lover s union with the beloved 'Ratna' depicts the fond delight of one who happens to get a precious jewel, but fails to make the fullest use of it Kuchha Nahin laughs at the folly of those who have the source of all wealth within themselves, but always cry that they possess nothing 'Adesh is the commandment of compassion Dev Bala alludes to the supremacy of simplicity over artificiality Kasauti establishes the purity and sincerity of the lover s heart 'Atithi delineates love which enters one s life like a gust and gradually becomes all powerful 'Sudha men Garal dwells upon the pines and pains inevitably involved in love 'Upeksha Karana' blesses disregard by the lover as it in fact, enhances love 'Vedana Thaharo welcomes sufferings Dhul ka Khel gives vent to the enjoyments of simple carefree life The last two poems under one caption— Vindu —exhibit the coexistence of pains and pleasures in the life of the lover

It is, thus clear that *Jharana* not only contains some enchanting pen portraits of natural beauty, it also evinces the poet s supremacy in presenting the mundane as well as the transcendental aspects of love

Lahar (1935) contains the miscellaneous mature poems composed by Prasad after *Jharana* Besides the four longer poems— Asok ki Chinta Sher Singh ka Shastra Samarpan , Pesola ki Pratidhvani and Pralaya ki Chhaya —it contains twenty eight beautiful lyrics

In 'Ashok ki Chinta the poet dilates upon the agony and anguish felt by Ashok after his victory over Kalinga—an event

involving large scale massacre and bloodshed The poet has succeeded in portraying the inner conflict of the great Emperor 'Sher Singh ka Shastra Samarpan describes the exemplary valour shown by the Sikhs during the Anglo Sikh encounter in 1849 Pesola ki Pratidhvani resounds with the past glory and greatness of Mewar Pralaya ki Chhaya tries to provide a psychological analysis of the inner feelings of Kamala, the queen of Gujarat during Alauddin s conquest of Gujarat and thereafter The lyrics incorporated in *Lahar* contain some of the outstanding poems of Jayashankar Prasad

Kamayani is the epitome of Prasad s poetic genius It is his last poetic achievement This psychological and cultural Hindi epic contains fifteen cantos which are named (Chinta Asha Shraddha, Kam Vasana, Lajja, Karm Irsya Ida Svapna, Sangharsha Nirved, Darshan, Rahasya and Anand), not in accordance with the particular place character or event described therein but according to the mental instincts dominating human behaviour This work can safely be regarded as an allegory, symbolizing the development of the human spirit

The epic opens with the world submerged into water, during the deluge Manu is the only survival He is seen sitting at a high peak of the Himalayas—pondering over the past He meditates over the failings of the gods that caused their decay

The gloom is gradually over New rays of light bring with them new message of hope A new life begins The renewed curiosity about the world and its Creator culminates into new activity Manu meets Shraddha (Kamayani) She infuses new vigour in the vanquished veins of Manu and who rediscovers life He is now a happy householder Grains and animals add to his worldly wealth The couple live in perfect unison

Manu sees the pet animal playing fondly with Kamayani This gives birth to jealosy In accordance with the advice given by Kilat and Akuli (the two priests of the demons) Manu is once again the victim of the old vices Once again he indulges in animal sacrifice and addiction to wine in the name of the holy sacrifices Lust now enwraps him Shraddha tries to liberate him from the snare of selfishness She pleads for non violence, self sacrifice and service to all She however fails to bring him round Kamayani s motherhood enhances Manu s jealousy He is now whole heartedly devoted to hunting He feels no charm in Shraddha He pays

no heed to her timely advice and leaves his home

Manu then comes to Sarasvat Pradesh He is once again reminded of the ancient conflict between the gods, and the demons Kam (Cupid) curses him He meets Ida Manu takes over the reigns of her realm in his hands Sarasvat Pradesh hums with activity Hard work brings prosperity to the people of Sarasvat Pradesh Manu is now the maker and controller of their destiny He for himself, wishes to remain free from all rules and regulations—an absolute monarch over all including Ida Her subjects stand in revolt Manu is wounded

Kamayani sees all this in a dream She is very much perplexed She, along with her son starts in search of Manu and reaches Sarasvat Pradesh A coincidence brings her to Ida s home Here she meets wounded Manu She nurses his wounds and gradually he recovers A sense of repentance and remorse engulfs Manu He runs away from Sarasvat Pradesh Shraddha decides to find him out She hands over her son to Ida and wanders from place to place in search of Manu At last she finds Manu sitting in a cave on the bank of the Sarasvati Manu acknowledges the greatness of Shraddha She assists him in winning over his weaknesses It is through her graceful guidance that Manu is able to witness the transcendental dance of Nataraj (Lord Shiv) They move higher and higher in the Himalayas Shraddha leads her wearied follower to a higher plane There illumined planets are now visible to Manu Shraddha explains 'These three planets represent desire, activity and knowledge They in fact denote the worlds of desire action and knowledge Their separation from each other is the cause of all evils Their unison brings bliss ' By the grace of Shraddha, Manu is able to see them united and to hear the sound celestial within his spirit This is the moment of overwhelming rupture and self realization Manav (Manu s son), Ida and quite a large number of their subjects also join them in this rejoicing The epic thus closes with complete calm and composure the pure and compact Bliss'

In this allegorical epic, Manu represents the Human Mind Shraddha symbolizes Faith and Ida stands for Intellect So long as the mind is free from the clutches of crude rationality it is deeply devoted to faith (shraddha) Jealousy disturbs its confidence and drives it away from faith It then enters the realm of intellect (ida) This new situation provides worldly prosperity but it also leads to the evils of over rationalism Riches make the mind all the

ᴗᴝless It is sick of the self created barriers It tries to break and is hurt in the encounter Once again, faith (shraddha) the desired solace and leads it to a plane which is much and nobler It is faith that reveals the secret of true success— between desire, action and knowledge Faith (shraddha) ᴗ/es to be the gracious guide of the human mind on his way nal peace and prosperity As a human being, Shraddha for Indian womanhood

epic, based on psychology, thus presents a poetic commen human life and its destiny It is an excellent exposition of ᴵvite Anandavad It is a unique repository of the pen port- various human feelings and emotions—anxiety, hope, faith, modesty jealousy, anger, resignation and peace As a in Hindi poetry the entire epic is bedecked with the t imagery and poetic embellishments Eros, quiescent, pathos, wrath and wonder are the sentiments delineated in this ᴗomposed in various suitable metres *Kamayani* is rightly the best representative of the romantic mystic poetry in

Prasad has contributed thirteen plays to Hindi lite Eight of them are historical three deal with mythological and two have emotive basis Besides, he has written one —*Urvasi* (1909) i e a play with a mixed verse prose

(1911) is his first (one act) play It was first published in ı It follows the canons laid down in Sanskrit dramaturgy prose are intermingled The verses are composed in Braj The play deals with a famous episode of the *Mahabharat* ıdavas are living in a forest in exile Duryodhan goes there ˍ Chitrasen asks him not to do so Duryodhan disre- s advice A fight ensues Duryodhan and his es are imprisoned Yudhisthir asks Arjun to help their enemy Duryodhan during his distress The magnanimity ısthir is, thus, the kernel of this play

Parinaya (1912), containing nine scenes, was first pub- ı the *Nagari Pracharini Patrika* in 1912 Later on it was incorporated in the fourth act of *Chandragupta*

ˏ*a* (1912) is a lyrical play If establishes the supremacy

of Jayashankar Prasad as the pioneer in Hindi blank verse Published in the *Indu* (and later incorporated in the first edition of *Chitradhar*) the play presents the famous Pauranic episode about King Harishchandra The king had taken a vow to dedicate his son Rohit to Varun but he failed to keep the vow Varun is enraged Harishchandra then decides to sacrifice his son Rohit does not see any logic in such an act and hence he does not think it mandatory to abide by the wishes of his father Shunahshep the son of Ajigarta is brought to be sacrificed in place of Rohit A maid servant Suvrita then appears on the scene and craves for justice Maharsi Vishvamitra also arrives there Suvrita and Vishvamitra are found to be the parents of Shunahshep Shunahshep is liberated by the grace of Varun and peace prevails Non violence, compassion and an intense longing for the welfare of all pervade this play

Prayashcitta (1913) was published in the *Indu* in 1914 Later it was incorporated in the second edition of *Chitradhar* The play depicts the repentance of Jayachand after the demise of Prithviraj and Sanyogita In utter despair Jayachand commits suicide by drowning himself into the Ganga *Prayascitta* is the first original Hindi play having a tragic ending

Rajyashri (1914) is the first historical play by Jayashankar Prasad It was first published in the *Indu* in January 1915 The first edition had only three acts A few more scenes and one more act were added in the second (present) edition A comparative study of the two editions shows us beyond doubt that Prasad was a conscientious playwright always eager to improve upon his earlier performance The events described in the first edition are steeped in struggle It contains the traditional benedictions (Nandi and Bharat vakya) in the beginning and in the end Some of the dialogues are put into verse The second edition is a maturer work from the point of view of the plot characterization and the dialogues *Rajyashri* is a play full of events There is almost no attempt to analyse the inner feelings of the various characters

Vishakh (1921) is based on an episode from Kalhan's *Rajtarangini* The plot is simple and interesting but lacks in dramatic qualities The dramatist's imagination has made several innovations in this historical theme Premanand and Mahapingal are the creations of Prasad's imagination The most important event in the life of Vishakh the young brave hero of the play, is his love for Chandralekha This love is the source of inspiration for

all his valour Besides the great qualities of Vishakh, one can easily perceive his weak points also in the play Chandralekha is a well drawn character The dialogues are forceful—but they smack of the effect of the Parsee Theatre

Ajat Shatru—The first edition of *Ajat Shatru* was later on revised by the dramatist The revised (present) edition differs from the first in respect of language diction and dialogues Some of the verses included in the first edition are removed, and quite a few prose pieces are added The play is based on Jatak stories, the Purana and history The playwright has, however, taken necessary liberty to arrange and present the events and characters in his own way The events are interwoven in a manner that evinces playwright s craftsmanship

The theme of the play relates to three ancient Indian kingdoms—Koshal, Magadh and Kaushambi Ajat Shatru belongs to Magadh He is the son of Bimbasar, the King of Magadh Vasavi the sister of Prasenjit (the King of Koshal) is married to Bimbasar Padma vati, the Magadh princess is married to Udayan, the King of Kaushambi The events connected with Kaushambi may conveniently be treated as ancillary

The principal plot is concerned with Ajat Shatru He first appears as a cruel hunter Padmavati tries to bring home to him the virtues of compassion, but fails in her mission Ajat Shatru is coronated The libertine in him grows still stronger He now disregards his own parents—Bimbasar and Vasavi Dev Dutta, the antagonist of Gautam Buddha is his chief ally Ajat is faced with a revolt by his subjects At one stage he is imprisoned Vajira the Koshal princess lends him a helping hand Vajira and Ajat are later married A chain of events brings a change in Chhalana She is now sorry for her misdeeds Gautam Buddha s blessings bring peace for all

Ajat Shatru is neither a tragedy nor a comedy At the close of the play Bimbasar is seen trembling and falling but due to the benign presence of Gautam Buddha perfect peace and compsure prevail in the end Philosophically the play is a literary interpreta tion of the creed of compassion Compassion in the present context includes non violence forgiveness nobility, dutifulness, patience and love

However, the presence of many parallel themes make the play somewhat complicated It lessens the artistic effect Ajat fails to rise to the greatness of a hero The evil characters turn to goodness,

but this change is mainly mechanical The inner struggle is generally missing

Kamana (1923 24) is a symbolic play The characters—Kamana (desire), Santosh (contentment), Vinod (amusement) Lila (play), Vilas (luxury) Mahattvakansha (ambition) Lalasa (longing), Dambh (vanity) Durvritti (wickedness) Vivek (discretion) Shanti Dev (tranquillity) and Karuna (compassion)—represent various human instincts or emotions In fact they are the motivating forces that lead to human behaviour in different directions

The play opens in a primitive setting It is a floral island The inhabitants are simple honest and carefree persons living unitedly, like a family free from jealousy and greed A foreigner—Vilas (luxury) – enters into their innocent world and he brings with him gold Gold creates greed and consequently there is the struggle for personal prosperity even at the cost of the common good Wine follows and thus their life takes a new turn Personal rivalries now predominate bringing in their wake anger animosity and anxiety The social pattern changes—a pattern that makes the people sick of their sorry plight They realise the futility of the so called 'prosperity and progress and they decide to rededicate themselves to the same old life which gave them succour and solace *Kamana* is thus a literary analysis of the so called material achievements of man since primitive times and is also a sermon for the world of tomorrow

Janamejaya ka Nagayajna (1925 26) is a mythological play, based mainly on the *Mahabharat* and the *Harivamsha Purana* Most of the characters are derived from these sources Only four of them (Manavak Trivikram, Damini and Shila) are the creations of the dramatist The play dilates upon the struggle between the Aryans and the Nagas This ancient community of India (the Nagas) lived on the banks of the river Sarasvati They were forced to move to Khandavavana and were tortured by the Aryans The Aryan king Parikshit is killed by Takshaka Parikshit s son Janamejaya decides to avenge the death of his father This leads to various conspiracies and conflicts Ultimately, Janamejaya's marriage with Manimala ends this antagonism and establishes a lasting peace between the two warring communities

Besides giving a vivid account of the Indian life during the post-*Mahabharat* period the play also endeavours to hint at the basic tenets of nationalism independence and democracy

Skandagupta (1928) is regarded as the best play by Prasad It is a historical play in five acts We see here a happy blending of the Eastern and the Western dramaturgy It has no auxiliary themes There is no ambiguity about its ultimate aim All this has made *Skandagupta* a really forceful, pleasant and perfect play

The chief event is Skand s battle with the Huns The unscrupulous attacks by the Huns have weakened the Gupta Empire Saurashtra is under their heels and Malawa is not free from danger Valabhi and Kapisha are groaning under the clutches of white Huns On the other hand, Magadh has fallen a prey to luxury The salacious Emperor Kumaragupta is merely a puppet in the hands of his young wife Anant Devi The elder prince Skand is very much worried over this perilous position Meanwhile Bandhu Varma, the King of Malawa, seeks Skand s help Skand leaves for Malawa His own home land (Magadh) is engaged in family feuds Skand s mother Devaki Kamala Prithvisen and some loyal courtiers are on the one side and Puragupta s mother Anant Devi Bhatarka, Prapancha Buddhi Sharvanag etc on the other Anant Devi and her allies try to remove Kumaragupta from their way and they succeed in doing so In the meanwhile Dhatusen the prince of Simhala and a friend and helper of Skand goes to Kashmir There he sees Matrigupta Matrigupta who was appointed the governor of Kashmir by Skandagupta is Kalidasa the poet Dhatusen Matrigupta and Mudgal decide to reach Avanti In Malawa, Bandhu Varma and Bhim Varma are engaged in a bitter battle Skandagupta reaches there It is here that Skandagupta sees Vijaya (the daughter of a rich merchant of Malawa) and the two are attracted towards one another

Vijaya narrates this new experience to Dev Sena the sister of Bandhu Varma Dev Sena who is already in love with Skandagupta is very much perplexed to hear all this Skandagupta is however indifferent He thus faces a tussle between desire and duty He leaves for Magadh where the opponents are planning to kill Devaki the mother of Skandagupta Sharvanag reveals this secret to his wife Rama Rama opposes his villainous plan She also informs Devaki about it When Sharvanag accompanied by Anant Devi and Bhatarka comes to the prison house to kill Devaki Rama intervenes At that very moment Skandagupta reaches there Mudgal and Dhatusen accompany him Sharvanag and Bhatarka are imprisoned Bandhu Varma hands over the realm

of Malawa to its saviour, Skandagupta Sharvanag repents over his misdeeds and is forgiven by Skandagupta Prapancha Buddhi, a Buddhist monk, again instigates Sharvanag against Skandagupta On the other hand Vijaya is jealous of Dev Sena and tries to get rid of her with the help of Prapancha Buddhi Prapancha Buddhi conspires to kill Dev Sena by sacrificing her at the altar of the Goddess Ugratara Skandagupta and Matrigupta save her from the cruel clutches of Prapancha Bhatarka and Vijaya now reach Magadh Here Anant Devi is weaving a vile web Bhatarka contemplates a heavy blow to Skandagupta Skandagupta, along with Bandhu Varma Govindagupta and others, marches against the Huns and the Shaks The Shaks are defeated Govindagupta dies a heroic death Skandagupta assumes the title of Vikramaditya

Skandagupta s army chases the Huns by crossing the river Kubha Bhatarka manages to destroy the dam across Kubha leading to a sudden flood of water surrounding Skandagupta s army Skandagupta is also feared to be drowned and his mother Devaki fails to bear the sons separation and dies Kamala (mother of Bhatarka) reaches Gandhar Skandagupta Sharvanag Parnadatta Rama and Dev Sena are already there

Skandagupta is informed about the untimely death of his mother Devaki The grief stricken son visits the samadhi of his mother Here he happens to meet Dev Sena Skandagupta overwhelmed by the selfless love of Dev Sena takes a vow of celibacy Vijaya once again tries to entangle Skandagupta but he rejects her amorous advances Vijaya in despair commits suicide Parnadatta dies on the battle field Khingil and other Huns are made captive Puragupta and Anant Devi are brought to Skandagupta He forgives them Skandagupta coronates Puragupta Skandagupta faces a very great dilemma of his life when Dev Sena bids him adieu His heart is torn to pieces How can he permit his prime source of happiness and solace in life to depart like this? And how can he with his feeble and completely shattered mind beseech her to stay back? He finds himself utterly helpless and deserted Dev Sena consoles him and bows down before him— her lord in this life and her object of worship in the lives to come The two are thus united for ever and the curtain falls

Skandagupta is thus a poignant play of exemplary valour and true love

Chandragupta (1931) is a historical play in four acts It opens

with the conversation between Chanakya (the maker of the Mauryan Empire) and Simharan, the valiant Malav youth

Simharan hints at the conspiracies going on in Takshashila Ambhik, the prince of Takshashila, is annoyed to hear all this from Simharan Alaka, the princess of Takshashila is very much impress ed by the free frank and fearless Simharan She, however, entreats him to leave Takshashila

The scene then changes to the pleasure garden of Nand, the King of Magadh Here we witness the free play of luxury and licentious-ness Suvasini, the duaghter of the Magadh Minister Shakatar, is the central figure in these revelries

Chandragupta solicits Nand to help Parvatesvar the King of Panchanad Chanakya supports the proposal Nand does not like to help Parvatesvar as the latter had rejected Nand s offer to marry his daughter Kalyani He on the contrary insults Chanakya, who then takes a vow to annihilate the Nand dynasty

Alaka meets Malavika (the princess of Sindhudesha) Malavika has with her a map of strategic importance A Greek soldier tries to capture the map Simharan intervenes The wounded soldier runs to his rescue Alaka is imprisoned and brought before the King of Gandhar He sets her free He hands over his realm to his son Ambhik Alaka leaves Gandhar

Alaka comes to sage Dandyayan Chandragupta and Chanakya, on the one hand, and Alexander and his lieutenants on the other, also reach there Dandyayan introduces Chandragupta as the future Emperor of India to Alexander

Alexander asks for Chandragupta's help against Magadh Chandragupta declines to do so and prepares his plans to put an end to Greek onslaught Seleucus is wounded during his encounter with Parvatesvar The Greeks attack Malawa Alexander is wound ed Later he leaves India

Simharan and Alaka are married Parvatesvar at the behest of Chanakya agrees to stand against Nand Nand is eventually van quished and Chandragupta is coronated as the Emperor

Parvatesvar is killed by Kalyani who in despair also kills her-self Malavika saves Chandragupta at the cost of her own life The Greeks once again plan to attack India Ambhik and Simharan are determined to save their country Chandragupta is also ready to face the Greeks Suvasini is brought as a prisoner to the Greek camp Cornelia develops friendship with her Chanakya discusses

his strategy with Simharan Seleucus is wounded by Ambhik in the battle field Here Ambhik also loses his life The Greek camp is attacked Cornelia tries to commit suicide Chandragupta forbids her from doing so Seleucus is defeated A treaty with Chandragupta seems inevitable to him The western part of Sindhudesh is handed over to Chandragupta and Cornelia—the daughter of Seleucus, deeply devoted to India—is also wedded to Chandragupta Thus this 'glory (Gauravalaksmi) of Greece becomes the gracious Empress of India

There are, thus three main events in this play—the invasion of Alexander the extinction of the Nand dynasty and the defeat of Seleucus Besides the principal theme there are auxiliary themes connected with Simharan and Alaka, Philipos and Cornelia Chandragupta and Malavika Kalyani and Parvatesvar All these are spread over four acts The fourth act however does not contribute to the unity of the play Some of the scenes and characters are superfluous The play faithfully depicts the political, religious social and economic conditions of India during the Mauryan era, but the imagination of the poet has dominated over the historian Chandragupta is the hero but Chankya does not occupy a lower position Valour is the chief sentiment The erotic sentiment also occupies a significant place But above all *Chandragupta* is a play of patriotic sentiment

Dhruvasvamini (1933) is the last play by Jayashankar Prasad This historical play consists of three acts—each having only one scene In the preface the author has discussed—on the authority of the historical and mythological evidences—the possibility and propriety of divorce and remarriage Dhruvasvamini who is deeply in love with Chandragupta is forcibly married to Ramagupta the weak and unmanly King of Magadh The Shaks attack Ramagupta but he is still busy in his lustful revelries The Shaks who are fully aware of the weaknesses of Ramagupta offer to enter into a treaty with him on the condition that Dhruvasvamini and the wives of other Magadh courtiers are handed over to them which Ramagupta timidly accepts Dhruvasvamini very strongly objects to this most disgraceful offer Ramagupta sticks to his decision Dhruvasvamini then makes an attempt to put an end to her life, but Chandragupta saves her Chandragupta contrives a way out to befool and overpower the Shaks He decides to go to the Shak camp himself disguised as Dhruvasvamini

Shakaraj (the Shak King) is happy to know that Ramagupta has accepted his proposal He awaits Dhruvasvamini Dhruvasvamini and Chandragupta (disguised as Dhruvasvamini) come to him Shakaraj is overjoyed to find two Dhruvasvamini s before him He is, however, ready to have both of them as his wives Chandra gupta then reveals his true identity A scuffle follows and Shakaraj is killed by Chandragupta Chandragupta, assisted by his followers captures the fort of Shakaraj Ramagupta then enters the fort His soldiers kill Koma and Mihiradev All this leads to a revolt by the subjects of Ramagupta The State Council hails Chandragupta as the Emperor Ramagupta s marriage with Dhruvasvamini is declared invalid and Dhruvasvamini is wedded to Chandragupta

In presenting *Dhruvasvamini* the dramatist has not depended much on history The love affair of Koma with Shakaraj and the imposing personality of Mihiradev are the creations of Prasad s imagination and so is the case with Ramagupta s attempt on the life of Chandragupta at the close of the play Dhruvasvamini is undoubtedly the central figure but the character sketches of Chandragupta, Ramagupta, Shakaraj, Koma and Sikharsvamini are in no way less impressive Heroic and erotic sentiments have their due share An outstanding feature of the play is that it can be conveniently presented on the stage—this is in fact the only play by Prasad where the stage setting of each scene is provided by the playwright himself

Fiction

In the field of fiction Prasad s contribution is in no way less important He wrote seventy two short stories and three novels

(*a*) *Short stories* As early as 1910 the *Indu* brought out three short stories—Brahmarishi Panchayat and 'Gram —by Jayashankar Prasad The first two were based on mythological themes 'Brahmarishi depicts the conflict between Vishvamitra as a Kshatriya and Vashishtha, as a Brahman This theme was later developed by Prasad in *Karunalaya* Panchayat is an attempt to assess the comparative greatness of Skand and Ganesh—the two sons of Lord Shiv Gram is generally regarded as the first short unjustly story by Prasad It delineates a landlord who, during a visit incorporated his land happens to stay with an old woman who was exp oited by his father This realistic story was later in *Chhaya*

Chhava is a collection of Prasad's short stories written between 1910 and 1914 There were only five stories—'Gram, Chanda, 'Madan Mrinalini, 'Rasia Balam and Tansen'—in the first edition (1912) In its second edition (1918), six more stories—'Jahanara Sharanagat 'Ashok, Sikander ki Shapath, 'Gulam and Chittaur Uddhar —were added Seven out of these ten stories are historical and they evince Prasad s interest in the hoary past Jahanara' is the story of the Mughal princess who serves her ailing father Shahjahan in the prison, and who, by her selfless service changes the heart of his cruel brother Aurangzeb Sharanagat is knit around an Englishman and his wife who saves from drowning the wife of Kishor Singh the Thakur of Chandan Pur The English wife is so much impressed and influenced by the Indian lady that she embraces Indian manners and adores herself in Indian dress Ashok is based on history and legend Here Jayashankar Prasad has intermingled the story of Ashok s brother Vitashok with the famous episode about Tishyarakshita and Kunal Sikander ki Shapath' deals with the valour of the Rajput soldiers who go to Afghanistan to fight against Alexander Gulam is connected with Shah Alam Shah Alam had a slave named Kadir He gathered sufficient strength and attacked Delhi He captured the throne Later he took out the eyes of Emperor Shah Alam Chittaur Uddhar describes the wise valour shown by Hammir and his wife in recapturing their Chittaur fort from Maldev

'Tansen is a fine historical short story by Prasad The Gwalior Fort commander of Akbar is fascinated by the music of Ram Prasad. The court singer Sausan is also enchanted by his melodies A competition is arranged to decide as to who is a superior singer Ram Prasad is the winner Ram Prasad is asked to demand any prize He seeks for Sausan When asked Sausan craves for Ram Prasad The two are united and Ram Prasad is thus turned into Tansen—the King of Music Rasia Balam is a tragic tale The hero Balavant Singh loves Kusum Kumari the young princess of Arbudagiri The King is ready to marry Kusum to Balavant but the queen does not agree to it However a condition is imposed on the young lover It is decided that if he is able to cut a rock and carve out a way therein by the next morning, he will be married to the princess The lover is about to complete the task when he hears a fake cock s crow In utter despair he takes poison and dies When the princess hears all this she drinks the remaining poison and

also dies 'Chanda' is a story of love romance revenge and sacrifice 'Madan Mrinalini is the longest and last story in *Chhaya* It deals with a Bengali family Madan the hero, loves Mrinalini, the daughter of A N Banerjee, but he fails to understand how a north Indian non Brahman can marry a Bengali Brahman girl He therefore decides to sacrifice his love at the altar of religion

The chief characteristics of the stories collected under *Chhaya* are the predominance of plot, detailed descriptions, satire on social evils and sentimentalism The language used is ordinary and the style is generally artificial

Pratidhvani contains fifteen stories written between 1924 1928 They are 'Prasad, 'Gudad Sain' Gudadi Men Lal, 'Aghori ka Moha', 'Pap ki Parajaya, Sahayog 'Patthar ki Pukar Us par ka Jogi, Karuna ki Vijaya, 'Khandahar ki Lipi, Chakravarti ka Stambha', 'Kalavati ki Shiksha, Dukhiya Pratima and 'Pralaya

Prasad s short story is more of a 'song in prose *It is highly* emotional Sarala goes to the temple to worship the Deity She sees costly and beautiful flowers lying at the feet of the Lord She is ashamed of her ordinary floral offering Stealthily and reluctantly she throws her flowers towards the idol and sits in adoration To her astonishment this blessed girl finds around her neck the garland worn by the Lord 'Gudad Sain is the sketch of a beggar, who is fond of a child named Mohan Mohan s father does not like this One day a boy runs away with the rags of the beggar Mohan s father catches hold of the boy and scolds him The beggar does not tolerate this scolding—he sees the face of God Himself in the face of the child 'Gudadi men Lal presents the pen portrait of an old lady who earns her own livelihood 'Aghori ka Moha is the story of two friends—one of whom becomes an ascetic He, however fails to win over the human weakness—affection Pap ki Parajaya is a symbolic story, throwing light on the noble as well as the ignoble instincts in man Sahayog is a short story delineating conjugal relations 'Patthar ki Pukar is rather a 'song in prose resounding the cry of a stone which could have been turned into an idol but is left as a footstone on the entrance of a house Us Par ka Jogi is a beautiful love story having a tragic end Karuna ki Vijaya highlights a social problem—How to protect and help the poor illiterate children of our society? Khandahar ki Lipi throws light on India in Mauryan times Chakravarti ka Stambha'

centres round a pillar—Edict of Ashok. Kalavati ki Shiksha reveals the position of the wife in the household. Dukhiya is a pathetic story about a poor and hardworking widow. 'Pratima' is a psychological short story depicting the importance of true devotion. 'Pralaya' is the last story collected in the *Pratidhvani*. A young man and woman sitting on the high peak of the Himalayas see the entire universe submerged in water. They in their unison realize that deluge is but another name for creation. The young man and woman here symbolize the Creator and His Maya. The unison between Shiv and Shakti leads to eternal bliss (Anand). Pralaya may well be regarded as a prelude to *Kamayani*.

The short stories incorporated in the *Pratidhvani* do not aim at the detailed narrations or delineation of character. They are mainly meant to vindicate some emotion or situation. Quite a few of them are sketches. They are imaginative and symbolic. It appears that here the poet has overpowered the story writer.

Akash Deep presents the short stories written between 1926-29. They can safely be regarded as maturer works of Prasad. Plot, characterization and style—all receive careful attention of the author. The stories are mainly emotional. Some of them have a mystic touch.

This collection contains nineteen stories: Akash Deep, Mamata', Svarga ke Khandahar men, Sunahala Sanp, Himalaya ka Pathik, Bhikharin, Pratidhvani, Kala, Dev Dasi, Samudra Santaran, Vairagi, Banajara, Chudivali, Aparadhi, Pranaya Chihna, Rup ki Chhaya, Jyotishmati, Ramala and Bisati.

The first story—Akash Deep—is also the best short story of this collection. Though imaginative, the story is set against the background of the Mauryan times. Champa and Buddhagupta are captives on the ship commanded by Manibhadra. They help one another and get themselves freed. Buddhagupta by his extra-ordinary bravery becomes the master of the ship and also captures many islands. He names one of these islands after Champa who is now the queen of this island. However, Champa is not happy with Buddhagupta. She thinks him to be the assassin of his father. She is always reminded of her parents. She enkindles Akash Deep in the memory of her mother. Buddhgupta returns to India. Champa continues kindling the lamp till the time when the flame of her own life is extinguished.

'Mamata, historical story, brings to light Mamata a Brahman widow, who gives shelter to Humayun after his defeat at Buxar 'Svarga ke Khandahar men is another historical short story It has too many events and too many characters It is regarded as one of the complicated stories by Prasad Sunahala Sanp is a psychological story Himalaya ka Pathik consecrates love which knows no barriers 'Bhikhari is a tale of self respect Pratidhvani has a social theme Kala is a symbolic story, depicting the victory of sentiments over the senses Dev Dasi is a tragic tale told in the epistolary style Samudra Samtaran is an emotional sketch, presenting a sentimental picture of the pleasures and pains of love Vairagi is based on a philosophical problem—can detachment repudiate attachment? 'Banajara delineates Nandu a nomad. 'Chudivali was first published in the *Chand* under the title Kala ka Mulya It hints at an important social problem—the place of prostitutes in society Aparadhi is a pathetic story in folk lore style 'Pranaya Chihna is a romantic love story Rupa ki Chhaya' reveals an inner conflict Jyotishmati is a symbolic story eulogizing love 'Ramala is an impressive picture of a young beautiful and fearless lady who gives her hand alternately to two lovers Bisati is a story of love longing and despondency

The stories written between 1929 and 1933 are collected in the *Andhi* It contains eleven stories Andhi Madhuva Dasi, Ghisu, Bedi Vrat Bhanga, 'Gram Geet, Vijaya, Amit Smriti 'Nira and Puraskar

Andhi' is the first and the longest story of this collection This tragic tale of love and self sacrifice can safely be placed as a representative story by Prasad Madhuva presents the noble, sensitive and compassionate aspects of a drunkard Dasi as historical story depicts the vow taken by Balaraj, a soldier in the army of Masud Ghisu' is a realistic story Bedi is another realistic story of a beggar who puts into shackles his only son so that he does not leave him but the same shackles compel the child to bid an untimely farewell to this world Vrat Bhanga is the story of two fast friends—Kapinjal and Nandan Kapinjal becomes an ascetic and takes a vow not to wear any clothes This vow is broken by a chain of circumstances but in the words of Nandan 'it is not the breaking of the vow, it is its beginning Gram Geet is, in fact a rural song in prose—a touching tale of Rohini who is so much intoxicated in love that the world calls her mad Vijaya is

the smallest story of this collection. It aims at supporting widow remarriage 'Amit Smriti depicts the life in Kasi before the advent of the railways The journey by road was, then, an hazardous task, involving robberies and various other hardships 'Nira' is a thought provoking story depicting the feelings of a poor old father 'Puraskar' is undoubtedly, one of the best short stories by Prasad It displays vividly the struggle between love and duty Madhulika s farm is chosen to be ploughed by the king of Koshal She is offered a high price for her piece of land but she refuses to sell the land—the living memory of her forefathers At the close of the ceremony Arun the prince of Magadh expresses his heart felt love to Madhulika She regards it merely as an insult to the poor farmer girl Gradually the sweet memories of that memorable day bring a change in her attitude towards Arun She is now eager to recapture the lost moments and craves for the love of Arun Arun comes again and she welcomes him with all the warmth of her heart Her joy knows no bounds Arun is contemplating a political contrivance Madhulika gladly accepts to help him Arun attacks the Koshal fort He is, however defeated and imprisoned He is sentenced to death by the king of Koshal The king is still pleased with Madhulika He says to her, 'You may ask for any reward of your choice today Madhulika stands by the side of Arun and exclaims Then let me also be sentenced to death with Arun !

Andhi, thus contains some of the finest short stories by Jaya shankar Prasad

Indrajal brings to us the short stories, written between 1933 and 1936 It has fourteen stories 'Indrajal, 'Salim, 'Chhota Jadugar, 'Nuri 'Parivartan, Sandeh 'Bhiksha men' Chitravale Patthar Chitra Mandir, 'Gunda Dev Rath, Anabola, Viram Chihna and Salavati

The first short story of this collection—*Indrajal*—is an interest ing love story It presents a vivid view of the gypsy life Salim emphasizes Hindu Muslim unity Chhota Jadugar is a pathetic commentary on the life of those who are made to struggle very hard to earn their living. Nuri is a historical tale, delineating Nuri a beautiful young lady of Kashmir who loves Prince Yaqub Khan and waits, in prison for full eighteen years for her wish fulfilment—only to find the prince turned into a pauper 'Pari vartan is a psychological story, providing some clues to ideal

married life 'Sandeh' places before its readers the inner conflict of Ram Nihal, who is under an illusion that a widow (Syama) loves him The piety of Syama leaves Ram Nihal a desolate man Bhiksha men' is the story of Braj Raj—a married man—who for his love for a married lady Malati, leaves his household, becomes a driver and ultimately a beggar—only to be rebuked by his lady-love (Malati) Chitravale Patthara' is a story of desperate love It is told in the first person This imaginative story is set against somewhat mysterious background Here the stones are made to tell their tale Chitra Mandir depicts the prehistoric times, when the hearts of men and women were first spurred with emotions 'Gunda represents a class of persons whose religion is valour, who stick to their word even at the cost of their lives whose profession is bravery and who help the hapless This gunda of Kasi (Nanhku) is not only a dauntless robber but is also a man of principles and a true lover Dev Rath describes the degradation of the Buddhists in the 11th and 12th centuries 'Viram Chihna is a small story connected with the Harijan (untouchables) movement Salavati centres round Salavati, the daughter of Arya Dhavalayash of Vaishali Republic This lady of exceptional beauty participates in the beauty contest at the instance of Abhaya Kumar and others She is unanimously selected as the Beauty Queen of the Kingdom of the Vajjis Abhaya Kumar offers to marry her but by the majority vote she is handed over to Manidhar Manidhar does not marry her On the contrary he makes her a courtesan Manidhar is killed in a battle and Abhaya is the new commander Salavati gives birth to a son—Vijaya By a strange coincidence Vijaya reaches the hands of Abhaya, who brings him up Eight years pass Salavati is once again a participant in the beauty contest Here she is reproached as a courtesan She decides to leave this profession She now becomes the beloved wife of Abhaya Kumar

Salavati, thus, reflects the splendour and strength as well as the vanity and weaknesses of its times It is the last story written by Jayashankar Prasad

(b) *Novels* Jayashankar Prasad wrote three novels—*Kankal*, *Titali* and *Iravati* (incomplete)

Prasad s first novel *Kankal* was published in 1919 In the words of the publisher, It shows that the persons who are generally

treated contemptuously by our society have in them the potentialities to rise very high On the other hand, the persons who are eulogized as ideal and great' are susceptible to all kinds of weaknesses Without propagating any particular cult or creed the author has presented the characters as they are

The novel opens with the description of Kumbha—the religious congregation at Prayag Kumbha bestows boons on some and curses on others Shri Chand, accompanied by his wife, Kishori, reaches there He is in search of a Sadhu who can blessthem with a son They come to Dev Niranjan Niranjan recognizes Kishori She was once his playmate She has now come to him to have a son It is, indeed a great ordeal for the saint He runs away to Haridvar Kishori follows him Eventually she succeeds in having a son Vijaya

Fifteen years pass There is a huge gathering of devotees in Kashi on the occasion of the solar eclipse Tara the daughter of Rama is separated from her mother A women with an evil design catches hold of her Mangal, a volunteer, smells this fowl play At Lucknow, Mangal meets a local prostitute Gulanar He immediately recognizes her to be Tara He decides to save her from the clutches of the vile persons He takes her to Haridvar Her father meets them in the way but he refuses to take her back under his protection Mangal is about to marry Tara when his aunt Nando comes to know that Tara is in fact a prostitute Mangal leaves Tara to her fate and runs away She is now utterly helpless She decides to commit suicide An ascetic saves her She gives birth to a son Once again she tries to put an end to her life but fails She is then employed by Kishori as her maid servant under a new name—Yamuna

Kishori had got a son by the grace of Dev Niranjan but this caused suspicion in the mind of her husband Shri Chand He therefore, asks Kishori to leave Kasi with her illegitimate son Vijaya Dev Niranjan is now a frequent visitor Kishori Dev Niranjan Vijaya and Yamuna proceed on a pilgrimage to Vrindavan Here Vijaya falls a prey to the amorous attempts of a widow Ghanti This leads to a quarrel between Kishori and Vijaya Vijaya comes to Mathura Kishori goes back to Kasi and Yamuna remains with Gosvami Krishna Sharana in Vrindavan A coincidence brings Vijaya and Ghanti in close contact with a clergyman John, an English trader Batham his Indian wife Margaret Latika and their maid servant Sarala Vijaya and Ghanti now stay with them. A blind beggar

informs Vijaya that Ghanti is the daughter of Nando and she was brought up by Govind She got this girl in exchange of a boy who was, in fact the son of Sarala Vijaya is in a mood to arrange a meeting between Sarala and her son, but then it occurs to him that perhaps Mangal is her real son

Vijaya and Ghanti attend the religious discourses in the ashram of Gosvami Krishna Sharan Once they go for a boat ride They are chased by some wicked persons who want to kidnap Ghanti An encounter follows One of them (the Nawab) is killed Niranjan and Yamuna also happen to come there They ask Vijaya to leave that place Yamuna takes the crime of killing the Nawab on herself and is brought to the police custody Niranjan spends a lot of money to get her exonerated On the other hand Latika seeks divorce from Batham and she, along with Sarala comes to the ashram of Gosvami Krishna Sharan Batham marries Ghanti but she leaves him and turned mad

Vijaya begins a new life with a new name Naye He now lives with a robber Badan Gujar Gita is the daughter of Badan who wants to marry her to Naye, but she refuses Gala now works in the school run by Mangal and develops intimate relations with him Badan is killed in an encounter with the police Gala now comes to Mangal They establish a voluntary institution—Bharat Sangh Mangal falls ill and his illness takes a serious turn He is saved by a saint (Vijaya) Ghanti finds her mother (Nando) and is also cured of her madness Mangal and Gala are married Nando informs Tara that her son is alive he is now the adopted son of Shri Chand and Kishori Tara comes to Banaras with Vijaya Kishori and Niranjan are now not on good terms Shri Chand comes He is now a ruined man He has developed conjugal relations with a rich widow Chanda They have a daughter Lali Shri Chand wants to marry Lali to Vijaya They come to Banaras Kishori tenders her apologies to Shri Chand They both come to Ayodhya Chanda and Lali go back to Amirtsar Nothing is known about Vijaya Hence his desperate parents Kishori and Shri Chand, purchase a child (Mohan) from Nando and adopt him Kishori, however, does not forget her son Vijaya His separation makes her ill Tara now joins them as a maid servant and is happy to be near her son She brings Vijaya back to Kishori but who breathes her last Vijaya receives a letter from Dev Niranjan which informs him about his illegitimate relations with the mother of Tara This

makes him understand that Tara (Yamuna) is his real sister

Bharat Sangh organizes a demonstration *Ghanti* and *Latika* lead the procession *Ghanti* delivers a forceful speech, advocating selfless and incessant service of the downtrodden She points to a corpse awaiting cremation It is the dead body of Vijaya Yamuna also sees this *Kankala* (skeleton) Ghanti Yamuna, Mangal Gala and others witness this most pathetic scene, with tears overflowing their eyes

It is, thus clear that in the *Kankal* events (which spread over quite a large number of cities) play an important part Strange coincidences have rather complicated the main theme, already inter woven with various auxiliary themes The characters (although their number is large) are neither dynamic nor do they evince inner conflicts The novel provides a closer view of various sections of the society—the saints and the priests, the Aryasamajists and the Sanatanists the Sufis and the Christians the social workers and the prostitutes The caste system theory of Karma social disparities, human virtues and vices all have drawn the critical attention of the author The novel displays the hollowness of the Hindu society and hits at the rotten social structure in a language and style, which is free and frank

The *Titali* was first serialized in the *Jagaran* The first edition in book form was brought out in 1934 The *Titali* has ten female and fourteen male characters The plot is more attractive and well knit than that of the *Kankal* but it falls short of the literary descriptions which is an important characteristic of the *Kankal* The bitter critic and satirist (in the *Kankal*) becomes mild and constructive in *Titali* Moreover *Titali* is nearer to our daily life than *Kankal* The novel has a natural growth Struggle—both inner as well as outer—is present, but it has happy ending *Kankal* delineates urban life, *Titali* on the other hand, is a literary testament of Indian rural life

The novel centres round Sherakot and Banajariya Sherakot is a small ruined fortress and Banajariya is a wasteland near Sherakot Sherakot has seen days of prosperity but now it is a past story Madhuvan once the Zamindar of Sherakota, is now the owner of only this small fortress and a small farm His father is dead His elder sister Rajo has brought him up Rajo was married in a rich family but on the death of her husband the widow had no option but to pass her days with her brother

Banajariya belongs to Ram Nath He has a foster daughter Banjo (Titali) Banjo has glorious parentage Her father Dev Nandan, was a rich client of Mr Bartley, the owner of Neel Kothi (an indigo trading firm) Ram Nath was a Brahmin dependent on Dev Nandan 1855 was the year of severe draught Dev Nandan and his wife fell victims to it Before dying, Dev Nandan entrusted his daughter to Ram Nath who brought this child to Banajariya This little child of Dev Nandan is the young Banjo, who is named Titali by Madhuvan Madhuvan and Banjo have very great attraction for each other Their efforts turn the wasteland into a rich farm Madhuvan manages to sell the produce in the market

Indra Dev, the Zamindar of Dham Pur, has returned from England He had gone there in connection with his studies, and came in contact with an English girl—Shaila Her father was imprisoned and her mother had died Indra Dev employed Shaila in his mess He has brought Shaila with him to India Gradually Shaila becomes well versed in Indian life and manners While in India, she is constantly reminded of her childhood As a child she had heard a lot from her mother Jane about 'Neel Kothi'—their residence in India On her arrival in India, she tries to know as much as is possible about Neel Kothi —the place, enlivened by the sweet memories of her parents Shaila is deeply interested in the problems faced by the Indian villagers, and offers her active support in their solution 'Neel Kothi becomes the nerve centre of many welfare activities It has a bank and a hospital It is here that Banjo is married to Madhuvan

Madhuvan creates many problems for himself He injures a wrestler keeps a prostitute Maina in his house and gives a blow to Sukh Dev Chaubey He thus becomes an eyesore for the local authorities Consequently, he is deprived of the control of Banajariya He kills the Mahant and runs away He reaches Calcutta and becomes a rickshaw puller One day Shyam Lal and Maina hire his rickshaw A quarrel follows between Shyam Lal and Madhuvan and the latter gives a severe blow to Syam Lal Madhuvan is sentenced to ten years imprisonment

As a reward to his good behaviour in the jail Madhuvan is set free two years earlier He is anxious to reach his home at the earliest On the other hand, Titali and her fourteen years old son are eagerly awaiting for Madhuvan The son often asks Titali 'Mother, are you quite sure that my father is alive? Titali replies "Why not

my son? Don t you see this vermilion on my forehead?' Titali thus succeeds in consoling her son, but her own mind is not at rest She fails to believe that Madhuvan is really alive What then, is the purpose of her own life? She decides to leave this world She kisses the sleeping son and opens the door to leave her home for good To her utter surprise, she finds Madhuvan—'a tired soldier of th battle of life —standing at her doorstep

The *Iravati* (published posthumously in 1936) is the last work of Jayashankar Prasad It is a realistic depiction of the decadence that had crept into Buddhism and the subsequent conflict between Buddhism and Brahmanism Prasad planned this novel on the basis of historical records to present the political religious and social life in India during the Mauryan times

The principal character of the novel is Iravati a Dev Dasi in the Mahakal Temple Agnimitra, the young valiant son of Pushyamitra (a Magistrate of Magadh) witnesses Iravati s superb dance performance in the Mahakal Temple in Ujjain and falls in love with her Brihaspatimitra objects to such amorous entertainments within the precincts of the place of worship Consequently, Iravati is sent to the Sangh Vihar One night Iravati is walking on the bank of Kshipra She sees Agnimitra rowing a boat She decides to accompany him but the soldiers deputed by Brihaspatimitra stand in their way Agnimitra and Iravati are captured and brought to Kusum Pur

Clouds of war hover over Magadh The Kalinga king Kharvel is gathering power Pushyamitra handles the situation wisely Here leases Agnimitra and appoints him the commander in chief Kalindi a clever young lady of the Nand dynasty, creates some problems for Agnimitra She organizes a secret army—Svastik Dal—to put an end to the Mauryas She asks for Agnimitra s support Agnimitra declines to do so, in view of his attachment for Iravati Iravati who is in the Sangh Vihar, is sick of the life there She leaves the Vihar

Magadh is now surrounded by enemies It is becoming a den of the spies Iravati and Kalindi go to Dhan Datta, a jeweller to purchase some jewellery The Kalinga prince Kharvel also reaches there Dhan Datta invites them all for a dinner Agnimitra is also invited Iravati gives a dance performance The sweet spell is suddenly broken. The soldiers of the Svastik Dal surround them all and the novel ends here incomplete

Critics have rightly observed that this work, if completed, would have gained a prestigious place in Hindi fiction

Essays

Jayashankar Prasad has made valuable contribution to Hindi literature through his essays The thinker scholar, explorer, critic and artist—all have combined to make Prasad a great essayist His very first essay, 'Chandragupta Maurya', published as early as 1909, is scholarly study of the historical material pertaining to this great Hindu emperor and his times Later, it served as an Introduction to Prasad's play *Chandragupta*

Prasad wrote nine essays—'Prakrti Saundarya , 'Bhakti' Hindi Sahitya Sammelan', Champu , 'Kavi aur Kavita', 'Kavita Rasasvad , 'Mauryon ka Rajya Parivartan', 'Saroj and 'Hindi Kavita ka Vikas—1909 12 His historical essay 'Prachin Aryavarta aur uska Pratham Samrat Indra was published in the *Nagari Pracharini Patrika* in 1930 In this essay Prasad has on the basis of historical evidences, expounded his theory about the original home of the Arya« In his introductions to *Ajat Shatru Rajyashri, Skandagupta, Dhruvaswamini Janamejaya ka Nag Yajna* and *Kamayani* Prasad has given to us a critical analysis of the principal sources and themes of these works The introduction to *Vishakh* throws light on some literary topics

The essays written between 1935 37 were published posthumously in 1937 under the title *Kavya aur Kala tatha anya Nibandha* It contains eight essays 'Kavya aur Kala , 'Rahasyavad , Ras Natakon men Ras Ka Prayog , 'Natakon ka Arambha' 'Rangamancha', 'Arambhik Pathya Kavya , and 'Yatharthavad aur Chhayavad They contain some of the most original and authentic views of Prasad on various literary topics dealt therein

Jayashankar Prasad died on November 15 1937 at the age of 48 He started writing in his teens and his dedication to the Muse remained unhindered till the end His untimely death, thus deprived Hindi literature of many more classics of the first order Yet this great Hindi litterateur has left behind magnificent monuments which assign to him a place of honour in the world literature

Lyrical Art

DR RAMESH CHANDRA SHAH

Prasad is a lyrical poet with an innate theatrical sense of life At the same time he is a traditionalist in the special and precisely evocative sense in which only a poet of truly modern' sensibility can be called a traditionalist Only a poet of deep and intense emotional life can realise the necessity of putting his sentiments in order and of discovering some sort of a pattern in them Prasad, the most sensuous poet among his contemporaries thus, also happens to be the most intellectual amongst them

Because he feels intensely because he has extraordinary gusts and vitality, a distancing from his personal self seemed to him necessary in his creative expression He was fundamentally a poet, his response to life—whether it be past, or present, or future—whether it be the sight of a cataract or a happening in the yonder street, or the spiritual predicament of modern man—is that of a poet But no one else is so much on his guard against the temptations of rhetoric, and even of a very personal very distinct verbal felicity He can be direct and straightforward—using the first person singular voice to react to a situation, as in a few of his early poems.

I longed for you and won you but am unfulfilled
Like a fish in shallow waters what a state !
To reach for one, who with unbounded faith
had crossed a river mightly and in spate
    My disappointed, deep—without a name !
    It s myself and not you who is to blame

At other places—which are much more frequent in occurrence—he prefers to speak through a mask the richly personal experience becomes richer and more significantly expressive by virtue of being conveyed indirectly in a more impersonal mode Here is the opening stanza of a famous poem included in *Jharana* and entitled 'Vishad I give this time, the original in Roman script alongwith a rough translation

Kaun prakriti ke karuna kavya sa
Vriksha patra ki madhu chhaya mein
Likha hua sa achal para hai
Amrit sadrish nashvar kaya mein

[Who is here lying stretched, under the shadow of this Tree motionless inscribed, as if, across Eternity? Is it the poetry of Nature the infinitely gentle infinitely suffering essence of all created things? Who is the Immortal Essence in this mortal body?]

These opening lines themselves are characteristic of Prasad s way with words and ideas The direct first person is dropped, a third person is there occupying the foreground and yet it is a deeply subjective experience and mood that is conveyed all the more intensely, for being expressed thus The central mood and inspiration of the whole poem is established at once There is an object an objective existence, but it does not remain a mere object lying idly there and waiting for poetical treatment The experiencing subject (i e , the poet) does not remain aloof and merely interested in the object of attention before him—weaving his fancies around and around it Instead subject and object merge into a unity which is bigger than either, into something rich and strange One is reminded of a poem by another great contemporary of Prasad—a poem called 'Chhaya' by Sumitranandan Pant Both are examples of early poems and there is a certain obvious similarity between the two in regard to theme or setting But beyond this obvious resemblance they strike quite different paths and reveal very distinctly individual poetic procedures Pant's poem, too addresses itself to a 'shadow But how different is the tone and temper of this other poem ! To facilitate a comparative view of these early demonstrations of lyrical art, let us look at the beginning of Pant s poem as well this is how it proceeds

' Kaun kaun tum parihat vasana
Mlanamana bhu patita si
Vat hata vichchinna lata si
Rati shranta Vraj vanita si
Niyati vanchita ashraya rahita
Jarjarita pad dalita si
Dhool dhusarit mukta kuntal
Kisake charon ki dasi

[Who are you bereft of clothes,
dejected, lying prostrate on earth
Like a creeper hit by storm and rudely shaken
Like a Braj woman exhausted by love making
Fate forsaken shelterless downtrodden and ravaged
And smeared with dust with streaming hair
Who are you? Whose feet enslave you?]

Pant of course, evolved into a major poet in his own way But as we can see in this early example of his verse his lyrical intensity tends to be verbal rather than passional here we are more conscious of the poet than of the poetry He proceeds rather deliberately—preparing his effects, and expecting the reader, as it were, to pause and admire his virtuosity his inventive skill at every step Here he seems to overwhelm us with a host of tropes and comparisions They are of course, in the best tradition of Sanskrit and medieval Hindi ornamental poetry We are of course glad to be reminded of that tradition and do experience a curious satisfaction in their midst But the very richness and variety of this poetic entertainment distracts us and we are left wondering as to whether they inalienably belong to a particular experience Even if they do, the cumulative effect is of dissipation rather than of concentration

The similes and images in Prasad s poem on the other hand, do not serve a merely decorative or illustrative function Nor does their intellectual character prevent them from becoming precise and effective They carry us straightaway into the heart of the theme they involve us at once, so that we too achieve an inwardness with the poet s unique experience The poet appears to be stating and imaging a situation rather than rhapsodizing it He appears to be involved and detached at the same time and still the lines have a singing quality This is surely because the poet has the root of the matter in him A mood a feeling is communicated successfully to us, and yet it is something more than a mere mood that is induced in us We are touched and disturbed by what strikes us as a personally poignant experience and yet as the poem evolves this personal centre is transformed into something impersonal and we find ourselves gradually lifted on to a state of pure contemplation There is a genuine gradual evolution from stanza to stanza—no mere accumulation of interesting details Images and metaphors though combining freely are strictly subservient to the central theme always

contributing something fresh, and thus building up a most satisfactory impression of wholeness The movement of the poem is circular rather than linear Everything works towards a perfect unity of impression This unity, as we have already hinted, is achieved through concentration rather than elaboration No calculated effects words do not distract our attention away from the central experience to themselves It is not just the fineness of the poet s feeling for words that impresses us, but the inherent appropriateness of his feeling through them

Both poems appear to have been inspired by the same objective correlative (a shadow, in fact), but while in one case the poet seems to be working himself up into some emotion about it the other poet uses it to evoke a situation and then to make a significant comment on human life The loudness of the otherwise melodious epithets in the other poem presents a contrast to the quiet unobtrusive demeanour of the poet of Vishad The poem lacks a centre a definition in terms of the consciousness of the poet In other words it lacks emotional precision Prasad's poem displays a radically metaphorical and symbolic bent of mind Pant's poem, on the other hand displays a certain happiness of invention a loving care for detail and elegance, a preoccupation with the picturesque aspects of experience

One cannot help noticing at the same time, that Prasad is inclined to understatement because he is sure of his perceptions Pant s tendency on the other hand at least in this poem, is to overstate and overdo Prasad realises his experience in concentrated image as we can see further on in the same poem

Kisake tamamaya antartam mein
Jhilli ki jhankar ho rahi
[What heart of Darkness—this
Resounding ceaselessly with crickets music?]

Pant on the other hand chooses to dissolve it into a musical but rather vague abstraction

Chir ateet hi vismrit smriti si
Niravata ki si jhankar
[You are like the forgotten memory of a distant post
Or like the resounding of silence]

We can perceive even here from this earlier example that Prasad has an intimate relationship with his subject His shadow is anything but shadowy It has a way of converting the grosser energies of personal emotion into the finer essence of significant emotion

Prasad does not give too direct an expression to his mental conflict—to the emotional tumult within him He has a meditational approach to experience he achieves his poetry through a process of filtration as it were this process of filtration removes the grosser elements and allows only the subtler things to percolate through the fastidious poetic conscience Instead of imposing his own feelings or fancies on Nature and thus securing an easy purgation he reads nature—its various eloquent images and through that studied imagery struggles to order and define his inner world Just listen to a very early poem of his

Hope creeper like absorbs too much from me
but spares no chance
I ve drenched it day and night without a flower or fruit
Blue clouds full of life giving rain
Have sought to cure my want in vain

At this point it would not be out of place to have a brief look at the man as well as at his poetic and extra poetic fecundity Lyrical art cannot be divorced from the personality of the artist And if the artist happens to be also creative outside the confines of verse this productivity also must need affect the character of the verse he produces Prasad was not a cloistral man he was very much a man of the world and hence his richly theatrical sense of life that we alluded to at the very outset of this essay This theatrical sense protected his sensibility firm excessive romanticism from excessive sentiment as well as ideation He was a man of business and that business itself had been raised by him to the status of a fine art It was an exacting art requiring a lot of good taste discriminative faculty and skill Since his house was the daily haunt of scholars poets musicians athletes medicine men and astrologers he had to direct his tobacco sense to humanity also and thus he came to develop as keen a discriminative taste in regard to various human types as he had acquired in regard to the various scents and essences he had to deal with in his trade

His was an orthodox Shaivite house with a long established tradition of worshipping as well as philosophising Music concerts and dances formed a regular feature of his richly sensuous and ritualistic religion Under the loving protection of his elder brother, and in the congenial company of the rhyme addicts of Urdu, Hindi and Braj bhasha the boy had anxiously looked forward to dedicating his whole life to the service of his Muse But gross *necessity demanded that he should become a successful man of the* world at the age of sixteen and redeem the prestige of a house lying in shambles around him Thus the songs of innocence were nipped in the bud and the future lyricist had to concentrate his energies on the safe conduct of his family business Being made of sterner stuff than most poets he took an original revenge upon his circum stances Having set his house in order, he took his own inner life in his hands and with a steady and unimpaired growth astonished the literary world with the fruits of his genius Quietly and unobtrusively his writings permeated the literary atmosphere and wrought a revolution in taste

Behind his amiable and witty exterior, there lay an inner sanctum where the lonely mind communed with itself He was a man of tremendous reserve and detachment The concluding song of his play *Vishakh* expresses the essence of his personality

Avrit ho atita sab tera
Tune dekha sab kuchh mera
Prarda hone se
"Let all my past be hidden,
All that you saw was mine
Because there was a curtain

There is also his sense of the evanescence of human relationships—the fragility of things—and notwithstanding this, a cheerful acceptance of life as it is, an intuition of the worth of life and values in spite of unavoidable pain and disillusionment Let me quote couplet from 'Ansu

"I knew t was an illusion yet
My heart believed in you
Under the shade of that unreality
Sprang something that was true '

There is a very suggestive tradition about him that deserves mention here It is said that Prasad s inner or subjective personality was sustained by the ideal of Krishna and that the outward social or objective personality was moulded by the heroic image of Ram There is no doubt—and all contemporary reports confirm this fact—that this trait of unruffled serenity had become a part of his habitual self It is here that a brief mention of his philosophy would seem to be in place, for like his personality and like his multiform writing procedures, this philosophy too has something to do with his lyrical art This philosophy that has come to be associated with his name—the philosophy of 'Anandavad—had not merely been an inheritance it was earned by him against the heaviest odds and through great spiritual turmoil As we contemplate the tragedy of his life and the serenity of his poetic art a famous line of Yeats about the poet Keats begins to reverberate within us 'His art is happy but who knows his mind? We do however gain some glimpses of his mind as well if we dig below the surface of his happy lyrical art

The writings of Prasad can be divided into three groups marking the three stages of his evolution as a writer The collections of poems called *Chitradhar* *Kanan Kusum* *Maharana ka Mahattva* and *Prem Pathik* belong to the first period Then during the first half of the twenties he made his mark as a poet with the collection called *Jharana* But creatively the richest period of his life coincided with the last decade of his life between 1927 and 1937 During this period he not only produced his famous long poem Ansu and his magnum opus *Kamayani* but also the best of his novels plays and short stories Actually as we have already emphasised it as a fact of some relevance to the understanding of his lyrical art Prasad had been working simultaneously in more than one genre at every stage of his literary career Any discerning reader can see that Prasad s plays in spite of the fact that they are prose plays interspersed with lyrics seem to be more intimately related to his poetic workshop than his works of prose fiction although even there we can feel the presence of the poet in the language as well as in the atmosphere In fact the right procedure of following course of this versatile genius is to let the poetry itself occupy the centre of our field of vision and to bring in the plays and fictional works at relevant points to correct the prespective and sharpen the focus Such a study is bound to find the dominant

strand in his lyrical talent

Prasad s boyhood seems to have been inspired by the 'gusto that we rightly associate with Bharatendu age He grew to manhood in the literary climate of Dvivedi age, which was dominated by the ideal of correctness and also by the doctrine of 'the equivalence of verse syntax and prose syntax' His most creative period, however, coincides with the period known as the Chhayavad period in Hindi literature Of this period, of this movement of Hindi sensibility, Prasad himself became the pioneer

His early verses in Braj bhasha hardly suggest a budding genius They are of interest primarily as foreshadowing the poet s natural bent towards lyrical as well as narrative poems They also suggest his life long preoccupation with Love Nature, History and Psychology On the technical level they can be seen to reflect the poet s desire to explore the possibilities of various metrical arrangements The first poem of *Chitradhar* depicts the redemption of the deserted city of Ayodhya leading us from a present state of despair and desolation to the future state of hope Equally characteristic is the poem called 'Van Milan It is an idyllic poem connected with the story of Shakuntala, after the lifting of the curse Another poem called 'Kingdom of Love deals with an event in medieval Indian history —the defeat of the old king of Vijayanagar at the hands of the Moghuls through the treachery of his commander in chief The next poem is 'The Pleasures of Imagination , which reminds us of Keats s Ode to Fancy While going through early poems, we are struck by the recurrence of the word 'Manas —recognising it as a key word in the poet s vocabulary It certainly reveals the poet s early fascination with the human mind and its mysteries Mind or Heart is here imaged and conceived under the metaphor of the lake or of the sea Nature too appears in these poems in her various aspects and moods The last poem in the collection is a tribute to the poet, Bharatendu

Chitradhar was followed by a long narrative poem called Prem Pathik We have to mention it, because thematically it is symptomatic of the poet s life long obsession with the philosophy of love as the transmutation of an intense personal passion into something rich and strange and universally significant—that is to say with the theme of love as self discovery and self transcendence Technically also it deserves attention because it is here for the first time that we find the poet making use of blank verse and introducing enjamb-

ment It is also here, in this poem that the transition from Braj bhasha to Khari boli Hindi verse is achieved smoothly and convincingly It is important to notice that the same technical innovations are continued with happier results in Prasad s first little verse play *Karunalaya* The next long poem *Maharana ka Mahattva* demonstrates the poet's complete competence in handling a story in verse

Prasad s next book of poems called *Kanan Kusum* employs a great variety of metres and themes Most of them do suffer from the constraints that poetry has to suffer in an age of prose But a greater economy of words a greater skill in varying the tempo according to the mood and also a certain psychological interest in the analysis of emotion become apparent here The poet by now has acquired confidence through his experiments in living and writing through his realistic knowledge of characters and their motives The language of these verses is simpler and closer to the colloquial idiom What we do not find here is the intensity and the subtlety that we associate with his later poetry There are, however a few poems even here, which show the poet s growing impatience with the current norms of verse writing He was by no means blind to the importance of prose values in verse nine tenths of the poems of *Kanan-Kusum* can be said to exploit precisely these prose values But the uniquely personal voice and the original syntax of Prasad s Muse emerged later with the publication of *Jharana* At least these are two poems in *Kanan-Kusum*—entitled 'Bhav Sagar' and the sonnet— Why should I fear —which appear to point towards the breakthrough that was to come in *Jharana* At the same time, however, several poems included in this later collection of verse tend to feed back on the earlier idiom of *Kanan Kusum*

Notwithstanding this qualifying consideration, the poetic world we encounter in *Jharana* is a more or less unified and subjectively intense At least, now there is much more curb on the tendency to shift from subject to subject there is no hankering after historical episodes no compulsion to describe natural phenomena for their own sake Here we find a development from simile to metaphor from image to symbol A new found excitement in rhythmic values and a certain inwardness with words distinguish this collection from earlier ones, and a personal voice, a really new expressive voice begins to manifest itself To realise this change, we have only

to look at the title poem itself, which I translate below in full—omiting the practice, hitherto adopted by me, of giving the origi nal too in Roman script Here is the poem then roughly rendered into English verse

The springs are sweet and sweet the waves
And Time stands still bewitched, imaged
Against the magic fountain
  Erosion of the hill recalled
  The secret must lie deep, so old
  The spring is sweet, and sweet the waves
Event in time beyond remembering
The Heart, caught unawares murmuring
  before the magic fountain
Its filling slow with rain first rain
Its memory of the rock eroding
  event in time beyond imagining
It flooded then as now, my being
That time you looked and that look streaming
Just like this fountain
From the heart the heart!
It gushed and gushed like water from the eyes
  the wild love spreading spreading
It flooded my whole being, my whole being
Under Love's sacred, lovely shade
Under the shade, green with desire
  It flowed—the magic fountain
Life's fever—yes, to cool a long life s fever
  Truth! in thy perfect perfect grace
  Under Love s holy holy shade

This lyrical poem of Jayashankar Prasad announced a new voice and a new sensibility in Hindi poetry—the beginning in right earnest of the movement called Chhayavad The striking deve lopment in the poet seems to have come about as much through his growing command over language and versification as through personal development T S Eliot somewhere, has spoken of a poet s evolution along two mutually related directions—the direc tion of development in terms of craftsmanship and the direction of development in terms of personal growth We have already traced

the first of these lines of growth As for the second, we have already had sufficient hints and guesses about the ways in which the poet realises his inner leanings and potentialities The decisive turn however appears to have been brought about through the poet s experience of actual love Recent research hints at an event in the poet s life which does seem to support the internal evidence of a Beatrice like figure in the poet s life The poet is supposed to have confessed to a friend of his that he had fallen in love at first sight with a certain girl whom he had seen near a fountain The girl died shortly afterwards but the poet was haunted forever by the memory of that fateful encounter

Just a few days before he passed away, the poet scribbled three lines of verse which alongwith four lines written a month earlier, have come to be known as Shesh Geet (The Remaining Song) Here is a rough translation of these two fragments

O my life s pole star
Let your campassion spread itself
Like the blue expanse of the sky
Let restless planets haunt their dreary orbits

Let the brackish sea go on
Heaving forever
Let my boat sail across the streaming
Sweetness of thy light '

× × ×

'To day the brimming joy of life
Is full like cosmic wine
That heart intoxicating tender face

Chhayavad marks a signal moment in the history of Hindi sensibility At its best it was a recrudescence of qualities which had long been absent from Hindi poetry It distinguished itself by an accent on individuality of experience on the personal voice It rose in rebellion against the didactic the superficial the conventional At its worst it was a hankering after strangeness for its own sake and an exaggerated preoccupation with words arising out of deficient vitality and exhaustion of inner resources The most important phase of this movement is realised in the poetry of

Jayashankar Prasad, who, at a formative stage of his career, as we have seen, had steeped himself in the best productions of Dvivedi period and had thus acquired a discipline and a sense of prose values in poetry, which were to stand him in very good stead in his own subsequent development as a poet It was his sense of tradition that gave him an exact intimation of the real strength and the real limitations of the language available to him His sense of tradition included the historic sense which in many of his contemporaries is found lacking or defective

Having achieved an inwardness with his language and becoming gradually more and more conscious of the special needs of his own unique sensibility, Prasad was thus enabled to make those slight but significant alterations in expression which would be adequate to the newly extended frontiers of consciousness He made verse move more freely within the constraints of metre, effected a more exacting correspondence between rhythmic patterns and patterns of feeling, introduced enjambement and the art of varying the caesura His exploration of the sonnet form to express and resolve a tangle of emotion and to make it conduct a witty argument in verse is very interesting He had moreover, a scholar s sense of the history of words and a sharply defined vocabulary and idiom Frequent and precise use of certain words and their cadences has made them uniquely his own

With the serene confidence of deep-rooted sensibility, Prasad normally does not take undue and unnecessary liberties with his medium but he does dislocate them at times, whenever it is necessary to make his meaning shine through them Otherwise even his experimentation is marked by a spirit of humility rather than audacity In a way, this may well be looked upon as a limitation by some, when we remember the resourcefulness and linguistic range of his contemporary Nirala Prasad does not have the impetuosity of Nirala, on the other hand, steals an advantage over him in the matter of greater carefulness regarding detail as well as polish and finish in phrase making His verse appears to be less various and less energetic than Nirala, but to a discerning ear it is capable of rendering subtler nuances of feeling Musically also, it is no less effective than either Nirala s or Pant s verse Pant is often very original in its adjective his visual imagination may well have been the keenest of the three Nirala with his finer, more sensitive ears can weave his words with greater facility into the

texture of his poems Prasad uses his adjectives more sparingly, but still manages to achieve subtler sensuous effects than either This quality of his verse is difficult to render in a translation

His use of the inverted epithet is always startlingly fresh It is his favourite device and he justifies it by poetic returns Nirala is distinguished by the intensity of his feelings, Prasad by an insight into them While his verse displays a rare sensuous flavour, he is also the most intellectual and philosophical among his contemporaries If we pay close attention to the poetry of his mature period we will discover that his sensuousness engages not only his visual sense but also the senses of hearing smell and touch In fact his auditory imagination is subtler than that of Pant, subtler even than that of Nirala whose passionate eloquence otherwise makes Prasad s verse appear at times rather placid

Prasad s next poetic venture *Ansu* took the Hindi literary world by storm and a whole generation of poets was influenced by its tone as well as texture The haunting rhythm of this poem seem to have played a prominent role in moulding the poetic practice of a later generation as well the generation of post Chhayavad poets like Bachchan Narendra Sharma, etc This was a career which the poet himself could hardly have foreseen for this product of his poetic workshop

The poem in fact, suffers from a certain structural uncertainty The confident and most poignant interior monologue of the first few stanzas—and what marvellous are they—gets stuck up somewhere and the poem thereafter, proceeds rather fragmentarily The downward delving into the painful roots of that experience is hardly completed before the poet begins to build up an upward pressure to bring everything into light and air Up to a certain point, the sequence seems perfect and the evolution quite inevitable but after that the verses begin to relax as it were, and build themselves into rather autonomous units of poetry The development is arrested and then picked up again at a later stage The transition from the completely personal to the completely impersonal is not without its poetry but is somehow not made completely convincing The autonomous verses beautiful in themselves create a world of epigrammatic brilliance which somehow does not quite correspond to the locus of the poem

The message of the poem is that the whole world requires compassion and active human love and this message does irradiate

itself through the poem even the structural confusion we have spoken of, does not come in the way of transmitting this personally realised conviction of the poet Let us look at the first verse—to gain some idea of the content as well as the form of this poem

> Why in this heart by pity touched
>   A bitter tune is heard?
> Why in such notes of lament wild
>   Infinite grief is stirred?

That is how the poem begins The sea and the space are the favourite and recurrent symbols of this poet The first symbolises the world of human experience, and also the human heart with all its complexities The second symbol appears to stand for the release from this conditioning the world of imagination as well as pure untrammelled joy At a high point of this poem, at the very climax of it this image of the sea is once again invoked and there it somehow secures its full value as a symbol

Probably, this was the last, concluding verse of the earlier version of *Ansu* The later version keeps all the earlier verses intact, but adds some more They are neither superfluous nor jarring They do contribute something to such unity as the poem has been able to achieve as a whole The history of this poem seems to evoke a parallel to that famous 'Dejection' ode of Coleridge Coleridge s poem is basically a lament for the loss of creative power while in Prasad s poem it is difficult to say, which element gets the upper hand the poignancy of personal suffering or the imaginative brilliance of his creative vitality Sublimation of personal sorrow is equally well achieved Only the total impression is not as glorious and triumphant as Prasad must have intended it to be Coleridge escaped into philosophy, because the state of his nerves made him seek an escape from the emotionally charged life of a poet Prasad on the other hand, did not need to escape into philosophy His philosophy itself was the living context of his experience as well as the inevitable backdrop of that experience The tragic meaning of a particular experience even before its full implications were met by an individual sensibility were here liable to be dissolved rather prematurely by this all inclusive, all comprehending philosophy This is why there appears a certain discrepancy in this poem between the general framework of passive

suffering and acceptance on the one hand, and the clear and ringing notes of delighted creativity on the other Thus after enumerating so many parallels in Nature of this patient endurance, the poet bids farewell to his reader in the concluding verse, exhorting his personal 'Tear' to imbibe all these lessons of mute endurance, and to soften this harsh world like a dew drop from heaven

It is a fitting finale for a finely wrought poem But somehow, what remains with us long after we have laid the poem aside is not this beautiful benediction of the closing lines, but such earlier fragments of the poem as

I ve seen the Night, its emptied eyes
  Shedding those drops of light
Black treacheries of the Darkness then,
  devouring it, oh quite
When happiness humiliates
  With its malicious smile
Oh, do not seek with silent tears
  Your bondage to beguile
Why drink a handful of salt tears
  Out of your own cupped eyes?
Look at the falling star that grows
  Most luminous as it dies

Musical elaboration is supposed to be the supreme test of a lyrical talent Prasad was a poet who was also endowed with a fine sensibility for music The poems collected in his next book *Lahar* bring his lyrical gifts to maturity This is his last collection of poems published before the *Kamayani* and it presents us with some of his best lyrical performances

This lyricism of Prasad is evidenced throughout his work All his plays are interspersed with songs, which, apart from their contextual relevance have a way of staying fresh and long in our memory and affecting us with an independently haunting quality of their own He had felt hampered in the beginning by the prevailing uncertainties and confusions of an age of transition the confusions being linguistic as well as thematic The strings around him were languid the sounds were rather muffled and the notes were few indeed But in proportion as he gained more and more confidence in grappling with the themes that engaged his mind his

verse also came to acquire more and more resilience, more and more resonance This much needed breakthrough in verse had already been achieved in *Jharana*, but the most ample and consistently satisfying demonstration of his lyrical talent was achieved in the poems of *Lahar*—published in 1935

By that time, our poet had written almost all his best plays and novels The poems collected here do reflect a mature mind and ripened sensibility and thus appear to form a sort of prelude to *Kamayani* All of the poems are lyrical in tone and temper but some of them have a theatrical or conversational ring as well Some are pure songs In addition to these, there are three poems in free verse, one of which, entitled 'Pralaya ki Chhaya is a rather long poem All of these prove the poet s competence in handling free verse without surrender of lyrical quality Let us quote a few lines from Peshola ki Pratidhvani'—one of these free verse poems

Adrift the raft, alas!
Who is there to man the Oars
Against this howling storm?
Raging on all sides—the sea of darkness
Deep and inscrutable like
Blind Necessity itself
Raging everywhere—
Drowning the last the last vestige of light
Eternity!—
That is where we are
Dragged by the hands of Time, the Fisherman
Life-breath suspended
Gasping still in hope
In hope against the hopeless

This poem together with the other two in the series looks forward to *Kamayani* The deeply personal realisation of the cultural ruins is reinforced here with that historic sense which distinguishes Prasad One is reminded of Yeats s allusion to the sinking flame of Indian Tradition' No other Hindi poet, perhaps, is more concerned with the task of salvaging this sinking flame No other poet perhaps approaches this task with a lesser burden of necessary and unnecessary illusions

It would be a futile endeavour to try to render the more lyrical

poems of *Lahar* and it would be equally futile to paraphrase the other poems that are closer to discourse So it would be better to read two of such talking' poems and also a more or less independent fragment The first of these poems was occasioned by an editorial request for a piece of autobiography The editor was no other than Prem Chand who was going to bring out a special number of *Hamsa* devoted to autobiographical writings The second is a fragment of the second poem of his collection and the third is the opening lyric which gives its title to the book itself Perhaps it is not without deliberate design on the part of the poet, that the lyrics in this collection except for the free verse poems, are all without titles Here is, then, the first poem in its entirety

What story does the bee tell you
Through its incessant humming?
Look at the fading leaves that fall so thick this autumn evening
Life histories numberless are there twinkling in that blue sky
Making an endless mockery of themselves eternally
E en then you say, past weakness my own I must recite
I know t will gladden you to find this vessel empty quite
But I'm afraid, lest you should thus, after ransacking me
Imagine your own coffers full with my own bankruptcy
What irony! I can t but laugh at such simplicity
What should I sing?—my own errors or others' treachery?
How shall I tell those stories of the sweet and moon lit nights
The endless chats and ringing laughters of those young delights?
Where is that happiness whose dream I saw once and awoke?
Who came into my arms and smiling, vanished like a smoke?
Under the intoxicating glow of whose luminous face
The Dawn herself had drunk of love and known conjugal grace!
Why should I tell big stories of a life so sadly brief
Won t it be better to keep mum and let the others speak?
And then what will you gain by listening to my simple life?
My grief is sleeping quietly, let's wait till it is ripe

The second poem I have chosen to present is in fact a fragment of a bigger poem But the poet himself has separated it from the main body and has thus put special emphasis on it

Who are you and who am I ? please do not ask

Such questions There's nothing in it, Oh, listen
The ocean of my heart is always Kissing you
So, be magnanimous, O my horizon

The suggestive images of the former poem are vignettes as well as brief comments on a life which had more than its share of joys and sorrows The lightness and teasing chattiness of the lines conceal a rich store of experience as well as reflection The opening lines themselves distil the essence of a life which was uniquely lived and yet is one with the millions of common lives It is no mere philosophizing nor is it mere rhapsodising It is a detached contemplation of experience and an essential commentary on it—revealing a disillusioned yet sane sensuously evocative and yet at the same time austerely humble approach to the enigma of human existence The other fragment clinches a whole argument in an image that impresses us as wholly appropriate and adequate

But by far the most lyrically intense and meditatively soothing poem of this collection is the title poem *itself that sets the tone for* the book itself and sounds like the poet's love letter to Life and World, as well as to his own art of poetry

Arise O lovely little wave
Like a new awakened tenderness
Shade of the breeze spring blossoms bless
  Come and enliven this dry place
  Arise O lovely, little wave

So cool and soft resonant thing
Childhood's stubborn and restless ring
Where do you go just stay a while
  And play this game so sweet and brave
  Arise O lovely little wave

You rise and fall and come and go
And leave the marks of dancing so
Shaping these sands with rhythmic hands
  Look at the pattern that you gave
  Arise O lovely little wave

Lose not yourself in the lotus lands

Forgetting life s desolate sands
Come give your kiss to this dry bank
O erwhelm him with your fond embrace
Arise O lovely little wave

This is certainly not the place to speak of *Kamayani*—Prasad s epic poem For all its lyrical riches it lies beyond the limited scope of this essay Already we have had a glimpse into the basic concerns and preoccupations of this lyrical poet—his relationship with philosophy and psychology, with tradition, and with the actual struggles of humanity Thus Prasad who thinks even of philosophy as the commonsense of the soul, comes to apply in this great poem his historic sense to the myth of man For a poet like him who had always looked forward to dramatising the story of Man—the universal and quintessential man—it was but natural that his creative imagination should at last make its supreme effort and seek to appropriate the highest common factor of ancient mythologies in order to realise that supreme fiction of his life which somehow reconciles the conflicting claims of life and art psychology and history, myth and modernity, religion and secularism This is precisely what *Kamayani* seeks to do and this is what it accomplishes by focusing the lyrical, the dramatic and the fictional capabilities of Prasad with a single minded concentration

It is necessary to emphasise that Prasad for all his creative preoccupation with the past was neither an antiquary nor a medievalist He explored the past not in search of standards with which to condemn the Present but in search of wisdom that would not only reconcile himself to the present but would also enable him to play his destined role in it as the inescapably modern and humanist poet in search of a tradition that is holistic and universal

His plays and his fictions were the necessary instruments of this search alongwith his verse—the plays in fact serving as telescopes and the fictions as microscopes The poems recorded the results of such explorations in a symbolic language that went on evolving from a private one towards a more and more inclusive and universal one The ground synthesis of these life long efforts was then realised through *Kamayani* which even on a formal plane would seem to have crystallised the experiences and consolidated the achievements of the poet the playwright and the story teller thus fusing all of them into single intensity

It must be said, however, that, but for the perfection achieved in his lyrical art, *Kamayani* would never have come into being at all If the work is distinguished by its architectonics, it is no less memorable for its lyrical flights A few examples would serve to illustrate this and to provide a fitting finale to this essay as well

This graveyard of the Gods, he sat
Evoking there in silence,
While for beneath—chaotic waves
Revoked their ruinous violence

× × ×

By and by the earth awoke
The Ice relaxed its hold,
The drowsy plants their faces then
Refreshed with sprinklings cold

Half-opened eyes of Nature did
Full consciousness attain,
The drowsy yawns of angry waves
Seemed going to sleep again

Proud earth, in wedding garments still
Lay crouched on ocean's bed
Remembrance of the Night's tumult
Still rocked her swimming head

× × ×

I try to pause and think alas!
Thinking is not for me
A crazy girl sits in my heart
Muttering incessantly

Epic of the Soul

PROF NAGENDRA

As I set out to assess the aesthetic value of *Kamayani*, I am reminded of a very significant remark by Longinus

> ' The largest intellects are far from being the most exact A mind always intent on correctness is apt to be dissipated in trifles but in great affluence of thought there must needs be an occasional neglect of detail '

No doubt, *Kamayani* has several artistic flaws There are some obvious architectural defects in its plot construction, the framework of its story is rather frail and creaks under the weight of the gigantic theme which contains the evolution of the entire human race within its womb Its characters do not have sufficient flesh and blood in their bodies The story suffers from lack of action and tempo These and several other artistic flaws have been pointed out by different critics including some literary artists as well And yet, *Kamayani* is a great work—possibly the greatest of its kind in modern Indian literature

Prasad has designed this poem as an epic The keenness with which he has tried to establish the historicity of its theme in the preface, is an evidence to prove that he had planned to write an epic It would therefore be in conformity with the poet s basic design to examine its merit as an epic In the present context it may not be very fruitful to enumerate the various elements and components of the epic enlisted by rhetoricians of India and the West We shall, therefore underline only the essential features of the epic, which might have a universal significance and may apply to the epic in general irrespective of the differences cultural and literary traditions of different languages These are

(i) Great Theme
(ii) Powerful Sentiments
(iii) Sublime Characters
(vi) Grand Style and
(v) Universal Message

The event of Kamayani is to be seen as under these heads.

Great Theme with a Universal Message

The theme of an epic is composed of events or episodes. The grandeur of the plot, thus, lies in the greatness of its constituent episodes and events and the greatness of an event is to be measured by the intensity and extent of its effect in terms of time and space. The plot of an epic is made up of such events as have a lasting and wide influence on human life.

The events of traditional epics—such as wars, conquests, revolts, national and religious assemblies etc.—are great because of their far-reaching effects. War has been the central theme of epics in every country because it involves large masses of human population and its effect lasts for a long time. The [illegible] in the past completely changed the course of [illegible] Europe has not yet recovered from the aftermath of the two wars. Judged by this standard, it is not difficult to prove that the events in *Kamayani* are great. But they are not [illegible] the events of the traditional epic in the sense that they occur not in the physical world, but within the human psyche. The major events here are complete dissolution of [illegible] by the deluge, the first meeting of Man and Woman and their mutual attraction, procreation, expansion of man's possessive instinct, his desperate struggle to have complete mastery over Reason, consequent frustration and neurosis, analysis of its causes and final attainment of psychic equilibrium followed by eternal bliss. Obviously these events do not have any physical dimensions but they play a vital role in the psychic life of the homosapiens. Actually all the great events in the physical world, all the creative and destructive activities of man are reflexes of his psychic activities. This fact has been established beyond doubt by modern researches in the Science of the Unconscious. The poet of *Kamayani* has realised this truth and expressed it in his work through psycho-physical symbols. In short, the events in *Kamayani* have their own epic grandeur and vital significance, but they occur not in the physical world but in the psychic life of man. The origin of love between man and woman which culminates in procreation may not have any spectacular attraction, but it is the basis of the evolution of the human race. Similarly, man's efforts to acquire complete control on Reason or Intellect has been an eternal struggle wi[illegible]

continues even today in the form of space conquests and other scientific developments And finally, the attainment of psychic equilibrium and consequent spiritual bliss is the summum bonum of human life

It does not mean however that *Kamayani* is totally devoid of events of physical magnitude Wherever the story develops on a material plane the events acquire great physical dimensions The powerful description of the Deluge in the first canto Manu s single handed fight against the followers of Ida his stubborn confrontation of the powers of Nemesis or the panoramic vision of Shiv s cosmic dance in the later chapters could be cited as examples But the greatness of *Kamayani* s theme does not so much lie here as it does in the ceaseless effort of the Primeval Man to conquer Nature by acquiring complete control over Reason or in the resolution of the eternal mystery of Human Existence presented through the cosmic view of the amalgamation of the three planets which symbolize the three basic instincts of Human Psyche

Taken as a whole the theme of *Kamayani* possesses enormous dimensions It is not the life story of one great man or the chronicle of one royal dynasty or the poetic representation of one particular age it is the story of the evolution of the Human Race from the beginning to the end Whereas other epics present only some particular phases of human civilization *Kamayani* attempts to present a complete view—the development of human civilization in its totality The attempt is not fully successful, but even its partial success is a unique achievement

The focal point in the theme of *Kamayani* is the organisation of three basic impulses of human psyche to feel to know and to will The poet has given it cosmic dimensions by using the symbol of three planets which exist apart but are ultimately joined together by the supernatural powers of Shraddha who represents faith The divergent functioning of these three impluses poses the eternal problen of human life Whenever they are disorganised and function independently of each other there is tension and chaos all around Our modern world also is faced with this same problem Today culture polity and science are directed towards three different goals Whereas culture supported by religion professes the cult of humanism politics is governed by narrow national interest and science is progressing independently of the two This lack of harmony has created an atmosphere of universal tension This is

the basic problem of the modern world or human life in general and it can be resolved only when our culture, polity and science function in harmony, with unshaken faith in humanity *Kamayani*, thus, presents the basic problem of the modern world on a universal and eternal plane The identification of the temporal with the eternal, of the regional with the universal is the distinctive feature of a classic in general and of a great epic in particular Obviously, one could not think of a more sublime consummation of an epic theme

Basic Sentiment

The basic sentiment of *Kamayani* is worthy of its great theme Just as its theme deals with human life in its totality and culminates in the resolution of the eternal problem of the Universal Man, its basic sentiment is Spiritual Bliss resulting from a permanent harmonization of the three impulses of man in which all other sentiments are merged finally

Sublime Characters

According to Indian Poetics the hero of an epic should be a distinguished man of sublime character He should be virile, extremely sober, patient and steady He should be a man of firm determination and his self pride should be duly contained The hero of *Kamayani*—Manu—obviously does not fulfil these qualifications and the critics have made a capital of this fact without trying to understand the rationale behind it Prasad was a master builder of characters Surely the artist who had created the gigantic figures of Chanakya Skandagupta and Chandragupta could not have failed in the case of the hero of his magnum opus But here the situation was different The conception of an accomplished hero endowed with the qualities prescribed by Indian Poetics was possible only in an advanced state of human civilization, whereas Manu is the Primeval Man of the human race and represents the Human Psyche in its evolution from inception to perfection His character therefore passes through different stages of psycho-biological evolution In the earlier stages, he naturally possesses crude traits of animal existence He is self centred possessive impatient and lustful He suffers from indecision and inertia being unconscious of his potentialities But gradually he emerges from the animal stage and attains the final state of perfection In his conception of

Manu s character Prasad has been guided, and rightly so, by the theory of Evolution on the one hand and by the system of Shaivite philosophy on the other which outlines the evolution of Human Psyche or the Individual Soul from the initial state of ignorance and inertia till its ultimate identification with the Supreme Soul The hero of *Kamayani* lacks the requisite accomplishment in his earlier life, but ultimately he reaches a state of cosmic sublimity which reduces into insignificance all the prescribed qualifications of the traditional proto type

One solitary man struggling all by himself for the conquest of Nature the builder of human civilization and its first legislator The author could have conceived of Manu's character on these lines as well and that would have been more in conformity with the ideal of the traditional hero Acharya Ramachandra Shukla had this image of Manu in his mind and was disappointed not to find it in *Kamayani* Prasad was not unconscious of it and the opening lines of *Kamayani* unmistakably point in that direction

On a lofty peak of the Himalayas
Seated under the shade of a cliff
One Man with tears glistening in his eyes,
was looking at the surging waters of the Deluge

And he was certainly competent to develop this image in its full dimensions, but the constraints of his theme did not permit him to do that He was dealing with the emergence of the human race and was naturally working under the laws of psycho biological evolution

The other two main characters possess the requisite attributes of the epic personae Endowed with the finest feminine virtues—compassion, affection, sweetness and faith, Shraddha is a living symbol of human kindness There is an allegorical element in her character which raises her to a universal plane Ida has a magnanimous personality and carries herself with great dignity Here also the outlines of their portraits are not very hard and concrete because of their allegorical undertones but that much is inevitable in the peculiar framework in which they are posited

The Grand Style

The epic style excels other forms of style by virtue of its un

common qualities which impart a kind of grandeur to it According to Aristotle it should be capable of digesting strange words and metaphors The style of *Kamayani* is uncommon consistently and at places almost to a fault Even in the descriptions of common incidents, it does not come down to the ordinary level, and, excepting some very rare instances, it is singularly free from petty and trite usages The diction is by and large highly ornate—profusely enriched by a frequent use of metaphors and picturesque imagery The use of colourful words and allusive expressions culled from the Vedic texts and philosophical treatises have raised it far above the common level of speech

The story of *Kamayani* is told by means of various artistic devices such as reflections and self analyses, soliloquies, scenic presentations dream, etc It is only here and there that the poet resorts to direct narration, which is normally used to supply some missing link The matter of fact narration is conspicuous by its absence in *Kamayani*

The works on Indian Poetics have not expressly defined the epic style but the long list of subjects to be incorporated within the epic indirectly points out that its style should be capable of treating a variety of themes of different magnitudes The style of *Kamayani* amply satisfies this condition It describes the horrors of the Universal Deluge the intricate working of the human mind, abstract concepts of philosophical systems as well as powerful emotions and sensuous yearnings with equal felicity Besides these the epic style should also possess some other qualities it should be expansive, voluminous and irresistible like a torrent The style of *Kamayani* is generally deficient in these qualities except in the description of a few events of great physical dimensions such as the Deluge in the first canto or the rehabilitation of the city of Sarasvat in the eleventh However it becomes quite forceful in the portrayal of Man s ego reflected through his mental as well as physical struggle and attains sublime heights in the spectacular presentations of the Cosmic Dance and the three Symbolic Planets in the thirteenth and fourteenth cantos The deficiency of volume and powerful movement is again explicable in the light of the inward development of the story which also explains the undue proportion of lyrical qualities in the style Normally the lyrical element is deterrent to epic grandeur but here it is finely woven into the texture of the plot and adds to the over all artistic quality of the

Similarly the allegorical element also is a handicap in an epic but in *Kamayani* it forms part of the essential theme

Thus the style of *Kamayani* has its own grandeur which has enabled the poet to fill in a vast vacuum with his creative imagination

Conclusion

Kamayani is a great epic without doubt It was not in the nature of Prasad to follow any tradition mechanically It would there fore be infructuous to look for an adherence to the rhetorical conventions of the epic outlined either in the Indian or in the Western Poetics Yet, all the essential elements of an epic are prominently discernible in the poem. There is only one glaring exception—action which has hampered the physical expansion of the story But as we have already explained this is the natural constraint of the theme which traces the evolution of the Human Psyche through the psycho physical development of Manu's life The poet has, therefore, ingeniously used the allegorical technique which transforms Manu into a proto-type of Human Psyche

Kamayani thus does not fit into the framework of the conventional epic It is not an epic of secular life it is an epic of the Soul The allegorical technique which normally hinders the thematic growth of an epic has been used here as an artistic device—and the lyrical element also, instead of working as a deterrent contributes to its aesthetic merit This great epic of the evolution of Human Psyche or this grand allegory of the development of Human Civilization is a novel experiment in the history of liteary art—and a unique achievement

A Study of Poetic Form and Technique

DR AKHILESH KUMAR TRIPATHY

Jayashankar Prasad is one of the major poets of the Romantic School known as Chhayavad in modern Hindi poetry It is more or less, akin to the English Romantic poetry in form and content with, of course, some basic differences as those of cultural milieu and the historical background The prominent poets of the Chhayavad group are Jayashankar Prasad Sumitra Nandan Pant, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala and Mahadevi Varma All these poets were non conformists in their own ways and wrote poetry with a strong romantic outlook The country during this period was engaged in a fierce battle against alien rulers The prospect of independence held promise of revolutionary changes in the entire pattern of life The era of stagnation was drawing to a close and the nation stood poised for a heroic leap into the future Naturally in the writings of these poets the romantic sensibility has an unmistakable tinge of patriotic fervour Like the poets of the Romantic School in every literature these Hindi poets were endowed with extraordinary creativity and made significant innovations both in respect of the form and content of poetry

Among the romantics Prasad is a poet of extraordinary versatility By his inimitable artistic ingenuity vast erudition and powerful creative imagination he has made almost every genre of literature an eloquent medium of expression Leaving aside his achievement in drama and fiction his contribution to modern Hindi poetry is of an outstanding nature His formulations about the function of poetry as well as his handling of its varied forms for the expression of modern Indian sensibility were the inevitable results of his personal way of life his profound knowledge of Indian poetics and literature and above all of his ability to achieve a relationship of perfect rapport with the ethos of the age

Prasad s poetic craft is a brilliant illustration of his genius for adapting his themes to refreshingly new verse-forms Verse form is an essential and integral part of a poet s creative process Every verse form has a dual significance On the one hand it relates to a tradition While on the other it represents something singularly

new in terms of modifications the poet may have considered vitally necessary for the proper articulation of the new sensibility of his age Here the genre and the craft stand in a relationship of perfect harmony with each other and together constitute a happy organic literary piece

The selection of a medium is part of a poet s craft A poet is bound to change his poetic mode in accordance with the changed matrix of his experiences Inevitably there is a qualitative change in his craft as well The form of a work of art thus is determined by the nature of its subject matter and the way the writer handles it The ancient epics derive their form from the grand themes the poets selected for poetic treatment Sometimes a single theme is treated variously by different poets in different ages In one age it is given an epical form in another it is dramatic and in still another it becomes lyrical

In the moment of creation the writer is faced with the problem of selecting a medium suited to his purpose This selection depends on the nature of his themes and sentiments If they are emotive and symbolistic he chooses verse as his medium But if they are prosaic and descriptive the artist takes recourse to prose This division however is relative because we have examples in literature of poetry becoming prose and prose becoming excellent poetry Still it is true that the material suited of fictional treatment in prose cannot be handled poetically After having selected his medium the writer has to make choice of the specific literary form If his theme is grand and embraces a vast range of life in time and space his choice will naturally be the epic form But if his themes are subjective lyrical and limited in range he will choose lyric or muktak (stray verse) as his medium Thus the genre which will embody the poet s experiences is decided in the very beginning of the creative process Later the poet makes use of various kinds of images symbols myths figures and styles suited to his subject matter

An epoch making work represents a singular blend of poetic truth poetic form and poetic-craft It demands an independent verse form which could best illustrate its theme The traditional genre with its rigid outlines is found inadequate to the poet s purpose He feels the need of modifying it in order to achieve proper articulation Thus verse forms get modified from time to time and in this process some new verse forms come into being We find thus that there are

possibilities of any number of verse forms in literature

While making a critical study of Prasad s poetic achievement we will have to keep in view Indian as well as Western forms of poetry The poet s knowledge of Indian and Western poetics enabled him to experiment successfully with different poetic forms He has shown amazing originality by making a verse form appear completely new and original Prasad writes in his theoretical essay that since the subtle feelings of inner self bring about some uniqueness in the external and solid form also [1], a meaningful change in verse forms (due to the inner experiences and aesthetic sense of the poet) is natural and appropriate Prasad has used the traditional verse forms of the ancient Sanskrit literature but he has resurrected them and infused them with new life Thus a correct appraisal of Prasad's poetry requires a broader outlook on the ancient poetic forms on the one hand and the poet s individual talent on the other

As the present essay seeks to study Prasad's poetic craft in relation to his experiments with the various forms of poetry the other genres such as the novel, the short story and the drama in which he made a mark remain outside the area of our discussion On the basis of serious critical study Prasad s entire poetry can be divided into the following verse forms

(*A*) *Narrative Poetry*
 (i) Epic Poetry *Kamayani*
 (ii) Episodic Poetry (a) Long Readable Episodic Poetry Prem Pathik ' 'Maharana ka Mahattva
 (b) Lyrical episodic poetry *Ansu*

(*B*) *Muktak Kavya* (Independent or Stray Verses)
 (i) Readable *Muktak* Poetry *Chitradhar Kanan Kusum*
 (ii) Lyrical Poetry Ode Sonnet and art song etc *Lahar Jharana*

(C) *Short Narrative Poetry*
 (i) Short Narrative Poetry "Ayodhya ka Uddhar , "Van Milan
 (ii) Narrative-dramatic Poetry Pralaya ki Chhaya "Sher Singh ka Shastra Samarpan' , Peshola ki Pratidhvani , 'Ashok ki Chinta

(*D*) Poetic Drama *Karunalaya, Kamana*

The Epic and Episodic Poetry

Prasad has written epic and episodic poetry and has dealt with large as well as small segments of life with equal mastery Deviating considerably from the rules of the traditional epic and episodic poetry he has given these forms an altogether a new shape by his characteristic aesthetic sense and innovative talent He has made them powerful vehicles of modern Indian sensibility which apart from idealism mysticism and patriotism typifies a pure scientific and rational approach to life We find a happy blend of content and form in his epic and episodic poetry As it is typical with a romantic poet the subjective element is so dominant in Prasad that his epic poetry has acquired new dimensions under its impact Similar is the case with his episodic poetry In his well known composition *Ansu* (Tears) the subjective element gets the better of the narrative element so that some critics are not prepared to acknowledge *Ansu* as an example of pure episodic poetry The epic and the episodic poetry of Prasad can be divided into three major categories (1) the epic (2) the long readable episodic poetry and (3) the lyrical episodic poetry

(*1*) *The Epic* *Kamayani* the crowning achievement of Prasad is undoubtedly one of the greatest epics in world literature It is a modern epic seeking to present life in all its implications As a work of art *Kamayani* cannot be judged exclusively in the light of the traditional poetic principles An enlightened critic would soon realise that a poet like Prasad could not have projected his unique and sublime vision of modern Indian life through the conventional epical form *Kamayani* is an excellent example of great epic poetry by any standard The eminent Hindi critic Nagendra has acknowledged it as a grand epic and pointed out the elements of sublimity in it It is true that the plot the style the characterisation and the motif of this epic contain all the elements of sublimity as defined by Longinus and analysed competently by Nagendra However with its all embracing vision and the spirit of the age it embodies *Kamayani* seems to have been written in close conformity to the principles of the traditional Indian epic The story moves along two parallel lines on the one hand it depicts the growth of a single individual and on the other the narrative moves in perfect order describing the events of the outer world One strand of the plot unfolds the story of the systematic growth of Manu s consciousness,

while the other strand presents the puranic and the historical events of ancient times in relation to Manu who is the last of the immortals and the first of the men and the progenitor of the present human race according to the Indian scriptures The plot of *Kamayani* offers not only a grand description of the triumphs and glories of a king or a royal family, it also unfolds the growth of human psyche

In fact *Kamayani* is like a prism The theme of the epic has four layers of meaning all of equal importance, and each having a significant role in determining the structural pattern of the work First, the epic is about the life and the exploits of a Puranic figure Manu Secondly its theme suggests the growth and development of human consciousness thirdly the epic has anthropological significance because it unfolds the growth and development of human culture right from its primitive beginnings and fourthly it is a spiritual epic because it portrays the urge the struggle and the final fulfilment of the individual soul after it has become one with the Universal soul when the pashu (the mean individual) becomes 'Pashupatinath (the God Almighty) In this fourth sense the *Kamayani* is an epic with a metaphysical theme representing the *Anandavadi* outlook of the Shaiv Pratibhijna Darshan in which the poet has profound faith

Kamayani transcends the limits of the traditional Indian epic and presents a fine example of the elasticity and suppleness of epic poetry as a genre It is the subtlties and tenderness of the inner world of human mind that illustrate the theme of the epic rather than the events of the outer world described so graphically in it The poet probably had a poignant awareness of the tremendous power of human psyche in determining the personality of an individual It is therefore this aspect of personality which finds a place of supreme importance in the presentation of the theme and characters in *Kamayani* This is one of the major factors which make *Kamayani* a great modern epic and differentiate it from the ancient epics In *Kamayani* Prasad has marvellously fused the external realities of the world in which the characters live with the realities of the inner world of the characters especially of the hero which determine the characters relationship with the outer world The aim of the poet is to highlight the sublimation of the hero s inner self In reality *Kamayani* unfolds Manu s onward march from the basest human and demonic levels to the highest level of superhuman existence

Prasad depicts in *Kamayani* the abstract human emotions and feelings such as Modesty (*Lajja*), Jealousy (*Irshya*) Reflection (*Chinta*) Hope (*Asha*) and Desire (*Vasana*) and presents them as human characters although their human traits have not been developed satisfactorily because of the poet s emphasis on their psychological characteristics rather than on the physical ones The real human characters derived from Puranas and ancient Indian history such as Manu Shraddha Ira and Manav and villian characters as Kilat and Akuli have been portrayed with considerable fullness and authenticity They grow and change and come close to the traditional characters of the ancient epics The entire epic is divided into fifteen cantos arranged in accordance with the growth and development of the theme The nomenclature of each canto is most suited to its theme This nomenclature is a new factor representing a deviation from the traditional practice in the history of the Indian epic The traditional epics are divided not by different titles for each canto but by the serial number of the cantos In *Kamayani* each canto has a separate and highly meaningful title It has also an independent form of episodic poetry with its characteristic lyricism *Kamayani* does not begin in the traditional manner with the invocation of the Muses or Mangalacharan it begins instead with the description of nature in all its horror and majesty The poet has used different metrical forms suited to the artistic requirements of different cantos The traditional Sanskrit 'Varnika (syllabic) metres which Hariaudh had used in *Priya Pravas* is avoided Prasad s use of matrik or moraic metre was dictated by the precise nature of Hindi linguistic structure But even while choosing rupamala, vir 'tatank etc the famous Hindi moraic metres he experiments creatively with their rhythmic pattern and musical melody

Kamayani offers examples of all the nine Rasas of the Indian poetics but Shant, Shringar and Vir figure prominently throughout The angiras (central ras) of *Kamayani* is Shant In the description of Shringar Prasad seems to have been influenced by Kalidas Amaruk, Sur Ghananand, Jayasi Bihari and Vidyapati Nevertheless his treatment of Shringar differs from that of the earlier poets It is marked by a sense of novelty for which the rigid convention of the classical ras theory offered no scope *Kamayani* is a typical product of modern Indian life and enshrines values of abiding human relevance Considered as the epic genre it is *sui generis* and its theme form and craft stand in perfect harmony with each other

We have thus an organic piece of art and not a mechanically contrived work

(2) *Long Readable Episodic Poetry* Here 'Prem Pathik and 'Maharana ka Mahattwa' deserve special attention They belong to the second phase of Prasad's literary career when he began bold experimentation with diverse verse forms and started using chaste Hindi In the earlier phase he was basically a classicist and wrote in a dialect known as 'Braj bhasa The second stage is important because for the first time we get obvious indications of Prasad s romantic sensibility and innovative genius 'Prem Pathik and Maharana ka Mahattwa' are narrative in form and each highlights one aspect of life But the poet is more at home in depicting the inner reality of human personality than in the portrayal of the objective world 'Prem Pathik is a love poem It is Prasad s earliest expression of the sublime and the mystical aspects of love and beauty Later, he deals with this theme more elaborately in *Kamayani* The tender and moving experiences of the lover and the beloved in the moments of union (sanyog) and separation (viyog) are presented with delicacy and vividness For this quality alone the poem will be acknowledged for ever as an important achievement of Prasad The poem has no traditional division into cantos It is divided into five parts each point of division indicated by one or two multiple signs This device ensures unity and uninterrupted lyrical flow The metre used is known as tatank with thirty morae (matras)

Maharana ka Mahattwa is an 'epic fragment The central figure of the poem is the historical Maharana Pratap the great patriot and glory of Mewar whose chivalry and exploits have been narrated in an intensely emotional vein The plot is slender, but it has been manipulated with great skill It develops through the dialogues of the characters and narrative description The poem is written in unrhymed black verse and the dexterons use of the meter known as 'arilla with twenty morae (matras) is an evidence of the poet s sure mastery of his craft

(3) *Lyrico Episodic Poetry* The *Ansu* is the best example of lyrico-episodic poetry There is a lot of controversy about the specific form of this long poem To some critics it is an excellent example of a lyric while others take it as a fine episodic poem In fact the elements of lyrical and episodic poetry are as inextricably combined

that the poem remains neither a pure lyric nor a pure episodic poem The perfect fusion of lyrical and episodic elements has resulted in a new kind of verse form The emotional transition from one quatrain to another is so natural and unforced as to give the poem a unique kind of unity of impression Each quatrain is an autonomous poetic unit but at the same time it also forms an integral part of the total structure of the poem Thus every metre of quatrain of the poem is independent and related simultaneously Each staza of *Ansu* can be a subject of independent critical study with a sense of completeness It can also however be studied as a part of the totality of the poem Considered this way, *Ansu* is both 'prabandha kavya and muktak kavya

The central theme of the poem is the agony of the lover who has not found fulfilment in love It is a pathetic cry of the bereaved lover who is completely broken due to separation from his sweet heart The pang of frustrated love is so intense that many critics have taken the poem as a fine example of elegy though it is not written to commemorate any body s death In respect of its musical appeal *Ansu* remains a matchless creation The expression of love experiences with their myriad nuances is intensely personal The poet appears to have made a declaration or confession of his own emotional involvement in the following lines

They are all like the sparks
Of my blazing heart burn
Only some traces are trailing
Of that sublime union [2]

Ansu has a distinctly new poetic form different from the traditional forms of poetry It is acknowledged as an important work of art for the novelty and uniqueness of its imagery as well Prasad was a scholar poet and his use of imagery in *Ansu* shows how deeply he was influenced both by Sanskrit and Persian poetry Most of the images in the poem have a nostalgic and evoke poignant memories of the past

Muktak Kavya (Independent Verse)

Muktak is a single small piece composite and complete in itself It does not form part of a larger work muktkam anyena analingitam It is essentially lyrical and embodies a single idea or feeling

Prasad's muktak poetry can be divided broadly as (i) readable muktaks and (ii) muktaks that can be sung The readable muktak is by and large narrative in form Muktaks with the quality of song are lyrical, emotional and musical

(i) *Readable Muktak (Stray Verses)* Prasad s contribution in this field is neither substantial nor significant During the formative stage of his career he wrote stray verses in 'Braj bhasa' which were first published under the titles 'Parag and 'Makarand Vindu in his poetical anthology *Chitradhar* Even in these early verses one can find examples of his originality here and there in the form of new similes, figurative expression and the element of mystery prominently characteristic of Romantic poetry

Prasad wrote these verses in the period of his poetic maturity also Compiled in *Jharana* and *Lahar*, the verses of this period are superior to the earlier ones in respect of their theme and technique Here we find varied forms of poetic expression The poet's bold experiments with metre and diction mark him out as a great innovator The temptation to dispense with the traditional forms is rather irresistible but critically viewed the achievement with the new modes of poetic expression offers no adequate compensation for the loss entailed in the discarding of the older forms

(ii) *Muktaka or Lyric with the Quality of Song* Prasad s lyrics of this type may be divided into two groups In the first we have lyrics composed under the direct influence of Vidyapati, Sur, Bharatendu and some other poets These lyrics are termed as art songs' For a long time after the Bhakti period of Hindi poetry art songs had been out of vogue In the modern age Prasad revived this genre and wrote songs of great artistic merit As regards the structure of these songs the first line a refrain incorporates the burden and is what we know as 'tek' The poet is meticulously careful about the rhyme scheme (antyanupras) Each stanza ends with the poet s name finding an appropriate place Such lyrics are grouped in the 'Makarand Vindu section of *Chitradhar* The lyrics beginning with the following lines are illustrative of the poet s originality both in respect of sentiment and expression

(1) Aho nit prem karat din gayo
(Oh the days have gone by in the ceaseless act of loving)
(2) Are man abhun to tu man

his dramas in accordance with the needs of the dramatic situation

Shorter Narrative Poems

Prasad has also written poems on the themes based on ancient Indian legends and history Such poems are narrative in form but they cannot be categorised either as epic poetry or as episodic poetry They are a class by themselves In size and structure they are akin to a lyric, but because of their objective quality and the poet s use of the narrative mode they cannot be termed as lyrics Different critics have sought to put them under different labels They have described them as small episodic poetry,' lyrical narrative poetry, longer songs long poems ' and 'story based poetry All these names illustrate one or the other significant aspect of this type of poetry In fact these poems offer a happy mixture of some vital elements of lyrical as well as epical poetry In terms of structure and theme these poems are shorter than narrative poems It would not perhaps be inappropriate to describe them as "short narrative poems These poems can be further divided into two groups The poems of the first group are written in the inform ative style the story or the event is presented in natural and simple narrative form It moves forward without deviations Some poems of this type are compiled in *Chitradhar* ("Ayodhya ka Uddhar ' and "Prem Rajya) and *Kanan Kusum* ("Bhaktiyog ', Kurukshetra , "Shri Krishna Jayanti , "Vir Balak ' and "Bharat)

The poems of the second group may be described as story domi nated dramatic poetry The theme is either a historical event or a legend and its presentation is dramatic Characters in moments of intense emotional crisis articulate feelings that had been pressing hard on their psyche and achieve, through this process of self-communion a remarkable sense of relief These poems come very close to Browning's dramatic monologues The most representative poem of this group is ' Pralaya ki Chhaya ' which presents with striking poignancy the turbulent psyche of Kamala, a lady with an abnormal consciousness of her own beauty Kamala s fatal decision to become the mistress of Sultan Allauddin and the sufferings that follow are an inevitable result of her maniacal beauty consciousness and Prasad s portrayal of her character is highly convincing The form of the poem is in perfect accord with its theme Besides Pralaya ki Chhaya there are some other poems which belong to this group These poems are 'Ashok ki

(O heart, you should get cured now of love madness)

(3) Madhup jyon kanj dekhi mandarayo

(Like the bee which haunts the flower)

(4) Aise Brahma lai ka kari hain

(Of what use is the attainment of such Brahman (Almighty))

A discerning scholar would soon notice the obvious impact of Sur and Bharatendu in regard to the theme the form, and the poetic craft of these lyrics

The lyrics of the second category seem to have been written under the influence of the British romantic poets and Rabindra Nath Tagore These are small poems intensely subjective and deeply musical Melody and rhythm result from a skilful use of words in appropriate sequence These lyrics are actually meant for being sung and can also be set to classical musical tunes At some places the use of words of Sanskrit origin complex images and obscure symbols render them somewhat unintelligible They are all the same exquisitely musical and neither the style nor the expression of feeling appears to be laboured According to W H Hudson the essence of lyrical poetry is personality This subjective element finds expression in Prasad s lyrical poetry in two forms In some poems the poet has identified himself with one or the other of his characters In the other kind of lyrics the poet expresses his feelings directly using the first person singular, I *Ansu* (Tears) is the best example of this type but some important autobiographical lyrics are compiled in *Lahar* also

In the lyrics of *Lahar* we find musicality and singability of superb order From the point of view of their style and the profound nature of their emotional impact some of these poems represent a landmark in modern Hindi lyrical poetry The major themes of these lyrics are love beauty chivalry pathos mystery and patriotism Under the influence of the English Romantic poets Prasad wrote lyrics in different forms including Ode and Sonnet Earlier also while he was writing in Braj bhasa he had composed some beautiful odes but it was later while he was writing the poems of *Lahar* that he composed some odes of great aesthetic value Generally Prasad has written sonnets in couples and these are compiled *Chitradhar* *Kanan Kusum* and *Jharana* Prasad s genius was essentially lyrical and we find lyricism intruding even into longer narrative poems Some of his lyrics stand in comparison with the best lyrics of world literature Prasad has inserted lyrics even in

his dramas in accordance with the needs of the dramatic situation

Shorter Narrative Poems

Prasad has also written poems on the themes based on ancient Indian legends and history Such poems are narrative in form but they cannot be categorised either as epic poetry or as episodic poetry They are a class by themselves In size and structure they are akin to a lyric but because of their objective quality and the poet s use of the narrative mode they cannot be termed as lyrics Different critics have sought to put them under different labels They have described them as 'small episodic poetry' lyrical narrative poetry,' longer songs, 'long poems and 'story based poetry' All these names illustrate one or the other significant aspect of this type of poetry In fact these poems offer a happy mixture of some vital elements of lyrical as well as epical poetry In terms of structure and theme these poems are shorter than narrative poems It would not perhaps be inappropriate to describe them as "short narrative poems These poems can be further divided into two groups The poems of the first group are written in the inform ative style, the story or the event is presented in natural and simple narrative form It moves forward without deviations Some poems of this type are compiled in *Chitradhar* (' Ayodhya ka Uddhar and "Prem Rajya ') and *Kanan Kusum* ("Bhaktiyog", Kurukshetra ', "Shri Krishna Jayanti ', ' Vir Balak and Bharat)

The poems of the second group may be described as story domi nated dramatic poetry The theme is either a historical event or a legend, and its presentation is dramatic Characters, in moments of intense emotional crisis articulate feelings that had been pressing hard on their psyche and achieve, through this process of self-communion, a remarkable sense of relief These poems come very close to Browning s dramatic monologues The most representative poem of this group is "Pralaya ki Chhaya' which presents with striking poignancy the turbulent psyche of Kamala, a lady with an abnormal consciousness of her own beauty Kamala's fatal decision to become the mistress of Sultan Allauddin and the sufferings that follow are an inevitable result of her maniacal beauty consciousness and Prasad s portrayal of her character is highly convincing The form of the poem is in perfect accord with its theme Besides "Pralaya ki Chhaya there are some other poems which belong to this group These poems are 'Ashok ki

Chinta Sher Singh ka Shastra Samarpan" and 'Peshola ki Pratidhvani (all in *Lahar*) In these three poems Prasad experimented boldly with verse libre and probably he did so under the influence of Nirala

Poetic Drama

Karunalaya is Prasad s first experiment with poetic drama It is a work of historical importance in so far as it meant the addition of a new literary form to those already existing in Hindi Inspired by Prasad s experiment the Hindi poets of the following generation wrote poetic dramas of great merit and distinction Some of these works are Dharm Vir Bharati s *Andha Yuga* (The Blind Age), Naresh Mehta s *Samasya ki Ek Rat* (A Night of Psychic Conflict) Dushyant Kumar s *Ek Kanth Vishapayee* and Agneya s *Uttar Priyadarshi*

The plot of *Karunalaya* is based on the legend of Harishchandra and Shunahshep which occurs in *Aitreya Brahman* The story goes like this The King of Ayodhya Maharaj Harishchandra hears the oracle from the sky that he should sacrifice his own son Rohit to fulfil his promise to Gods Having known the decision of his father Rohit persuades Shunahshep the son of a penniless Rishi (a saint) named Ajigart and gets him ready for sacrifice Just at the time of sacrifice the great Rishi Vishvamitra and his maid servant Subrata appear suddenly to divulge the secret that Shunahshep was their own son and not Ajigart s The ritual of human sacrifice too comes in for severe criticism The inner conflict in Rohit s mind is acute and has been vividly presented The mental conflicts of Shunahshep and Ajigart however do not receive detailed treatment

Prasad was not a blind imitator of the traditional verse forms He brought about significant changes in the traditional genres to meet the requirements of his age and his own aesthetic sensibility With his knowledge of Sanskrit Bengali and English poetry he was quite familiar with the verse forms used successfully in these languages and adapted them to his own purpose Hindi poetry acquired richness and variety as a result of Prasad s experiments with poetic forms in other languages

II

Very few poets have exploited the resources of language as

extensively as Prasad was able to do He excels others in respect of the wide variety of experiments with the poetic technique as well

During the ancient, medieval and later periods of Sanskrit as well as Hindi literature poetic figures were extensively used as a popular device of poetic embellishment In fact its charm for the poets was somewhat irresistible It was perhaps due to this reason that the writer of *Chandralok* declared figure of speech as the soul of poetry According to him poetry without a figure of speech is fire without heat In the morden age Prasad has used such figures of speech with extraordinary skill Since the range of his poetry is wide, it offers a rich feast of poetic embellishments The poet s creative genius has added new dimensions to the traditional figures of speech and besides embellishing his poetry they serve also as an effective medium for the communication of meaning

Prasad s similes have special flavour The following lines in *Kamayani* offer a brilliant example of what he was able to achieve on the level of both art and meaning

> The little tender lines of Shraddha s lips,
> Mellifluous sweet bloomed into streaks of smiles
> Like the lovely rays of rosy Dawn [3]

Here the contextual meaning is 'the *little* tender *lines* of Shraddha s lips , the non contextual the lovely rays of rosy Dawn', affection (redness) and the blooming state are the essence of both and like is the signifying word The non contextual reveals the tender beauty and exciting power of Shraddha s lips The smile on Shraddha s lips is as enchanting as the lovely rays of rosy Dawn

Prasad s similes become more effective when they are coupled with metaphors

> Oh woman! thou art faith immaculate
> And like the stream of nectar coursing in
> The valley of the Silver mount of Trust,
> Thou in the lovely vales of life shouldst flow [4]

The poet avoids the use of commonplace non-contextual objects howsoever appropriate they may be, for expressing a dignified contextual We find thus the use of such non contextuals as 'the stream of nectar and 'the Silver mount A river flowing in the

valley of the Silver mount makes the physical environment cool and the landscape lush green But here the river is not an ordinary one It is a river of nectar which is extraordinary in its life giving quality The unique Silver mount represents a glorious man These metaphorical non contextuals help the poet achieve exquisite poetic beauty

Prasad had a special fondness for metaphors This figure helped him achieve suggestiveness of meaning His use of this figure is natural and artistic and very often his expression becomes superbly pictorial This quality of metaphors has enabled him to present his experiences with extraordinary force The varied aspects of nature have found vivid portrayal

The Earth appeared like to a bashful bride
Sitting on sea bed rather timorously,
Stiff with a sense of violated pride
Engendered by the recollection of
The noise and tumult of the Night of Doom [6]

When the tumultuous waves subside and the flood waters of doom begin to recede a small portion of the earth begins making its gradual appearance The atmosphere is still charged with the trauma of devastation The stanza given above describes this stage of gradual change with pictorial vividness The earth and sea have been described respectively as 'bride and bed The bride earth is presented as sitting timorously, recollecting the noise and tumult of the night of doom with a sense of violated pride This is an excellent example of how Prasad s metaphors endow lifeless objects with human attributes

Hyperbole is a figure which magnifies objects beyond their natural proportions The essence of the contextual is magnified by the use of appropriate non contextual, consequently the attention of the reader gets halted abruptly on the non contextuals The magnified form of the contextual through the non-contextuals becomes so familiar with the reader that its natural quality is subdued and becomes secondary In this figure the non contextuals are of primary importance Hyperbole is a characteristic feature of romantic and erotic poetry Prasad has made abundant use of this figure With its help he has created symbols representing many layers of meaning Due to their inherent agility and freshness the non

contextuals used by him present the contextuals in a highly magnified form

Who has enchained the moon
With these dark dire fetters?
Why hoods of ruby serpents
Are full of precious diamonds?[8]

The non contextuals contained in these lines are traditional The moon' represents the splenderous face fetters represent the scattered locks on the forehead of the sweetheart, and hoods' represent the waving braid of hair on her back 'Diamonds suggest the forehead of the beloved The use of the non contextual for the description of beauty in the above stanza is highly appropriate

Allegory is another important figure in Indian rhetoric It is employed in poetry for allegorical and crisp expression Through the portrayal of the contextual the sense of the non contextual and that of the contextual is suggested simultaneously The basis of allegory is the use of adjectives which express the qualities of non contextuals and the contextuals in equal measure The following stanza is an apt example

Tress and thickets swayed
Branches tangled in embraces
Kissing the flowers permeated,
The sweetest songs of bees [9]

The poet has described an intoxicating natural scene with images of tangled bows in embraces and kissing of flowers We get a vivid picture of an enraptured maiden kissing and embracing her lover in a blissful musical environment

Ambiguity has been a powerful figurative device for the expres sion of complex poetic sentiments In this figure the poet uses words with pun or stanzas suggesting more than one meaning Here is an example from *Kamayani*

Of what strange flowers of magic loveliness,
Taking auspicious bits of rosy hue,
Dost thou with stooping head a garland weave
From which a stream of sweetness pours adown ?[10]

The 'auspicious bits in the stanza signify two things (1) lovely beauty and (2) good omen (a bride is a symbol of good omen in Hindu culture), rosy hue means (1) love, (2) full of love (the bride is full of love for her bridegroom), and (3) the colour of rose 'sweetness' means (1) love (2) bliss (*anand*) (3) wine (4) honey, and (5) spring (spring is a symbol of youth)

Prasad has also made artistic use of the figures of dissimilitude and paradox He has employed paradox for achieving spectacular effect This figure present an apparent contrast between two words or sentiments But when the reader goes deep into the meaning the contrast disappears and the revealed poetic sense is a source of unique aesthetic delight

This diamond heart of mine
Was crushed by tender Sirisha
Ice cold love flamed fire,
Burning with pangs of parting [11]

Diamond is known for its extraordinary toughness Only a sharp-edged slice of glass can cut it into pieces On the contrary sirisha is a fragrant tender flower Similarly there is a qualitative difference between ice cold and 'flamed fire' The tender sirisha has crushed the tough diamond and the ice cold love is flamed with fire On the verbal plane there is a sharp contrast of meaning But a deeper reading of the stanza gives us a delightful awareness of its emotional implications The diamond heart suggests the pure and transparent heart of the lover and the tender sirisha stands for the beloved who with all her sweetness and delicacy has broken her lover s heart by sheer indifference Only the happy memories of the former s love provide sustenance to the lover in his present state of loneliness and despair

It has already been said earlier that Jayashankar Prasad was familiar with British romantic poets We find in his poetry therefore many examples of the English figures of speech The common Western figures used by him are personification, onomatopoeia alliteration and transferred epithet In personification inanimate objects of nature or notions are spoken of as having life and intelligence A beautiful example of this figure occurs in the sixth stanza of the second canto of *Kamayani* entitled Hope where the poet described the earth emerging from the enveloping waters as a

bride These lines have been analysed in detail in our earlier consideration of metaphor

Onomatopoeia offers a harmonious blend of sound and sense The vocal sounds of the poetic speech reproduce the movements and sounds of nature This harmony of sound and sense is gained partly through the choice of words and partly through the device of rhythm We find frequent use of this figure in Prasad s poetry

All of a sudden the main lion gate
Fell with a crash [13]

× × ×

Narrate in sonorous sound
Some tales now lost in oblivion ?[14]

In the original Hindi the word used for 'crash is 'arraya , while in the second example kal kal dhvani' is used for 'sonorous sound The sense finds lucid expression as a result of the sound of these words

Alliteration is like the Indian figure 'anupras It is a consonance of sounds (not necessarily of letters) usually at the beginning of a word or syllable The jingle of identical beginnings produces musical effect

ककण क्वणित, रणित नूपुर थे,
हिलते थे छाती पर हार
मुखरित था कलरव, गीतो मे
स्वर लय का हाता अभिसार

[Their bracelets and their anklets music made
The garlands trembled on their heaving breasts
And in full throated songs consummate rhythm
Mingled with sound in heavenly harmony][15]

In this stanza the repetition of क ण, र ल, म, त creates the beauty of sound and sense

Hypallage or transferred epithet is a figure where the qualifying adjective is transferred from its appropriate place to some other

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Hypallage or transferred epithet is a figure where the qualifying adjective is transferred from its appropriate place to some other

place in a sentence or stanza without obscuring the sense The following is a fine example of this figure

> The sparks of passion darted forth abroad
> Erratic with excess,
> A sweetening fire rose flaming and the heart
> Uneasy restless throbbed, [16]

In this stanza erratic' is used as the adjective of excess while uneasy and 'restless are used for the heart But in fact all the adjectives are used for Manu who is in a state of erotic excitement

Imagery is a device of impressive poetic expression Although it has been used by poets in all times, it became a modernist cult in European literature during the early decades of the present century An image is the mental reproduction of a sensation caused by a physical perception According to C Day Lewis, 'It is a picture made out of words The function of an image is to help the poet express his emotions experiences and ideas with clarity and pictorial beauty An image embodies in specific form a poetic sentiment or a situation Romantic sensibility has generally been prone to seek articulation through beautiful crisp and sometimes complex imagery Prasad s poetry offers an infinite variety of images with profound and subtle meaning

The cognition of meaning embodied in a poetic image is possible through sense organs Hence images have been divided into several categories visual (sight, further divided into brightness clarity colour and motion) auditory (hearing) olfactory (smell) gustatory (taste) tactile (touch divided into heat cold and texture) organic (awareness of heartbeat pulse breathing and digestion) and kinesthetic (awareness of muscle tension and movement) Visual images are comparatively in greater use Prasad s visual images deserve special attention for their variety and power of effective expression

A romantic poet has special fondness for nature in its myriad manifestations and implications Here is an example of such an image

> Showering shafts of gold the Morning rose
> Like to the goddess great of victory

And in defeat the sable night of Doom
Beneath the waters sank and disappeared [17]

These lines present two beautiful images of morning First, it emerges like a chivalrous woman, sitting on a fast moving chariot and bringing havoc to the enemy camp by her incessant shower of shafts Second, it appears like the goddess Lakshmi who emerged with indescribable lustre and glory after the great event of 'Samudra Manthan (churning of the sea) described in our scriptures

Prasad is equally at home with auditory images The following stanza is an apt example of his skill to create a beautiful romantic atmosphere by the use of auditory imagery

Their bracelets and their anklets music made
The garlands trembled on their heaving breasts
And in full throated songs consummate rhythm
Mingled with sound in heavenly harmony [18]

The poet s use of words in appropriate sequence gives rise to a unique type of musical excess The effect is pleasant rather than cloying

Prasad has made use of olfactory images for suggesting female beauty The following stanza from *Kamayani* is an apt example

Like an embodiment of odour sweet
Incited by the wanton loitering wind
In *the skirts flowing of* a *flowering* wood,
Her body made of pollen particles
Brimming with honey sap ablooming stood [19]

Here the poet describes Shraddha as the very embodiment of beauty in female form The elements of mystery tenderness, and fragrance fused in superb harmony suggest the virgin beauty of Shraddha through the olfactory imagery

Gustatory images are not common in poetry and Prasad's poetry too has only a few examples But even in his restricted use of this image he proves his capacity for its skilful use The following is an example of gustatory image

Manu began to drink the soma juice
Together with the sacrificial meat,
The vital blood began to fill his limbs
With the elation of ebriety [0]

The roasted 'sacrificial meat has special flavour and when taken with wine it becomes more tasty The more important thing about this meal is the resulting sense of elation Manu experiences

Tactile imagery has a special place in Riti and Romantic poetry Prasad s artistry in the creation of tactile images is to be seen in the following stanza

Her radiant body was apparelled in
A fleece of rams whose fur was natural blue,
Belonging to the gentle land Gandhar,
It looked like an exquisite armour soft [1]

The words 'gentle and soft suggest the softness and the soothing touch of the fleece The delicacy and lustre of Shraddha s body are suggested by the word 'radiant

An image is essentially synthetic in nature It is a compressed aesthetic picture of all the congnizable elements i e, visual gustatory, tactile and olfactory with the predominance of one which is generally visual In fact every kind of image is more or less visual The inherent visual element of the image helps the quick perception of the poetic idea When an image is not directly visual the perception of meaning is on the subconscious level This is a very subtle and involuntary process of human mind and the revelation of meaning comes in a flash and is short lived In a synthetic image several images are intertwined so that one image unfolds another with greater vividness or intensity In Prasad s poetry we find synthetic images in abundance

The Hindi poetry of the chhayavad school is essentially pictorial This pictorial element appears in Prasad s poetry in its full glory These word pictures are not a mere description of the externals They give us rather a shimmering view of the soul of things described Great poets use image for its relevance to the theme In Prasad s poetry too image quickens our perception of the moral and philosophic implications of the legend or the story The poet uses it only when he feels that the plain narrative method is likely

to prove inadequate to his basic purpose of projecting his own vision of life The image in the larger context of the poem is a concretisation of this vision

Prasad not only wrote symbolist poetry, but also sought to formulate a theory about it In one of his essays he says "The apprehension of beauty is impossible without form As we apprehend beauty, we also create symbols to give our feelings a form "[22] Prasad s symbols may be divided into two categories (1) concrete symbols and (2) abstract symbols The concrete symbols are basically pictorial though they suggest something abstract or spiritual The abstract symbols are obscure but deeply suggestive in meaning These symbols are highly imaginative and thought provoking Concrete symbols are based on analogy which may be either between the size and appearance of the contextual and the non contextual or between the essence of the contextual and the non contextual There are also concrete symbols suggesting identity of impression given by both the contextual and the non contextual objects Prasad s poetry has a greater number of symbols of this type The following stanza from *Kamayani* is a good example of his symbolic device

> Oh thou first anxious wrinkle of reflection,
> Thou deadly viper of the wooded world,
> Wild furious and terrific like the first
> Upheaval dreadful of volcanic burst [23]

The deadly viper of the wooded and 'upheaval dreadful of volcanic burst are the non contextual objects whose dreadfulness represents the dreadfulness of 'reflection' Thus they stand as appropriate symbols of reflection Here the analogy is on the basis of the impression of the contextual and the non contextual

In some stanzas we find an appropriately arranged cluster of symbols suggestive of profound meaning

> Who art thou messenger of vernal grace,
> In autumn savourless supremely sweet
> A flashing line of lightning in dark clouds
> A cool, refreshing breeze in furious heat ? [1]

'Messenger of vernal grace symbolises Shraddha's pleasure giving

personality 'autumn savourless represents distress and suffering 'dark clouds stand for depression, flashing line of lightning is sweet memory and furious heat suggests agony

Symbols embodying subtle ideas and philosophical thoughts are abstract The entire epic *Kamayani*, describes symbolically the various stages of the growth of human consciousness The epic abounds in abstract symbols The description of Ira is a beautiful example of such a symbol

Her tresses spread like nets of logic broad
That forehead clear resembling the half moon
Like the world s glorious crown superlative
Her eyes like the twin cups of lotus leaves
Casting into the moulds of human minds
Attachment and indifference alike,

All learning of the world in science and art
Upon her bosom congregated lay
She had in one hand action s jar replete
With the essential juice of earthly life
The other hand the sky of thoughts sustained
With fearless and mellifluous support [25]

The poet here is describing simultaneously the various parts of female form and the symbolical meaning suggested by them Ira has been presented as the symbol of discriminating intellect which proves an interrupting factor in the way of Manav s perfect enjoy ment of worldly pleasures Similarly all the characters in *Kamayani* as Shraddha Manu Manav Kilat and Akuli are symbolical embodying one or the other human feeling or instinct

A study of Prasad s poetic craft would remain incomplete without a discussion of his poetry and poetic speech in terms of the Dhvani (suggestive art) and Vakrokti (oblique expression) schools of Indian poetics Prasad was deeply influenced by these schools The poet obviously believed that good poetry is not a mere choice of appropriate figures of speech or an ingenious arrangement of words it must suggest profounder poetic meaning

According to the exponents of suggestive art words used in poetry may have three layers of meaning (1) connotative mean ings (2) metaphoric or implied meaning and (3) suggestive

meaning The suggestive meaning may be of three types (1) suggestion of an item or an idea (2) suggestion of a poetic figure, and (3) suggestion of a sentiment In Prasad s poetry we have all the layers of meaning

In terms of this theory connotative sense is of less importance than the suggested sense However, connotative sense forms the base for the suggested sense and both have singular importance in poetry Prasad s poetry abounds in examples of suggestive expression Here is an apt example from *Kamayani*

Thou wilt have to lay down upon thy skirts
Soaked in with tears thy soul s totality,
And in thy lines of smiles thou shalt have to
Inscribe this bond of union absolute [26]

The bond of union' is a document of truce and friendship by two hostile parties In the present example the ' bond of union' suggests the quality of a woman who agrees with a smiling face to live in matrimonial bond with her man after having overcome the contradictions of her nature

Lakshana means transference of sense It is also supposed to be an extension of 'abhidha or denotative sense In lakshana dhvani connotative *meaning is subdued and transferred into an altogether* different sense

Her delicate limbs exquisite half concealed
Revealed themselves from under her blue robe
Like flowers of white lightning blooming in
A forest of blue clouds with flashes pink [7]

Limb can be used to denote any part of human body But in the present stanza its usual meaning is transferred into a different specific meaning i e , Shraddha s breasts

The etymological meaning of the term vakrokti is deviated speech It is a quality of poetic speech or mode of embellishment By obliquity Bhamah means a kind of heightened expression According to Kuntak vakrokti is the life of poetry It is therefore a deviation from the established mode of speech for the purpose of attaining impassioned utterance Kuntak further says that such an artistic expression is a result of both genius (pratibha) and skill

('Kausal') The poetry of the chhayavad offers copious examples of such expressions in its best form With its help the poet is able to suggest the multiple nature of reality, as is obvious by the following example

> Twas autumn the trees stood bare
> In the dry, shrivelled up garden
> You changed them into flower beds
> Blossoming leaves and flowers [33]

The meaning of the last two lines is like this

> You approached stretching the sheets of blossoming leaves and flowers

In the life of a young lover his sweetheart has a unique importance Her advent thrills the lover making the entire environment enchanting and his life purposeful She comes like a fresh breeze of life to him The poet has presented the situation with remarkable poignancy This situation has two aspects in respect of the poetic sense (1) the dry and shrivelled up garden with bare trees due to autumn represents the gloom and depression in the life of the lover and (2) the advent of the spring season which turns the dry garden into a bed of blooming leaves and flowers stands for the sweetheart who by her arrival fills the heart of the lover with a sense of fulfilment This description of the counterparts of a single situation makes the stanza superbly meaningful

We have seen thus that Prasad was both a traditionalist and an innovator In his use of figures of speech and different forms of poetic style he kept meticulously close to the Indian classical theory But he also realised that the proper articulation of modern sensibility required the adoption of new poetic forms He did not therefore hesitate to attempt bold experiments with poetic technique The achieved result was a happy synthesis of the old and the new But for Prasad modern Hindi poetry would not have branched off into new directions He gave the younger generation of poets a sense of freedom so essential for an unfettered blossoming of their genius In this sense he may rightly be described as the poet s poet an appellation most appropriately given to Edmund Spencer for his pioneering work in Elizabethan England

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Art of Fiction

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A versatile genius of the highest order, Jayashankar Prasad was a first rate poet, playwright, novelist, short story writer, essayist and critic No doubt the poet in him usually eclipsed the other facets of his creative genius, but he was always conspicuous for his fictional writings True he was a fictionist all through his literary career, he made a mark as early as the beginning of the second decade of the present century when he was in his early twenties and was deeply engaged in writing a historical novel entitled *Iravati* when the cruel hands of Death cut the thread of his life and snatched him from the world in 1937 at the age of forty eight only Thus his fictional writings spread all over his literary career of more than two decades and a half Besides he occupies a very distinguished place in Hindi fiction despite the fact that his fictional output is not as copious as that of his celebrated contemporary, Munshi Prem Chand, he has to his credit only five collections of short stories viz, *Chhaya*, *Pratidhvani* *Akashadipa*, *Andhi* and *Indrajal*—and three novels—*Kankal* *Titali* and *Iravati*—of which the last one is incomplete Hence it is essential to study and evaluate thoroughly his novels and short stories with a view to understanding his mind and art, and Hindi fiction as well

I

Prasad was not as fully engrossed in novel writing as in poetry and drama and it can be plausibly explained First he was essentially and primarily a poet and a playwright and therefore he resorted to novel writing only when he found the theme and subject matter of his choice unsuitable for poetic or dramatic treatment Secondly he practised it to seek a sort of refuge and relaxation after feeling over exhausted emotionally and mentally as a result of composing intensely emotional and highly imaginative and thoughtful poetry His taking up *Iravati* after *Kamayani* bears a testimony to it Lastly perhaps he seemed to believe that though the novel as a literary form was comparatively easier than poetry

or drama, yet it was not as fine and elegant a work of art as the other two genres No wonder Prasad has bequeathed to us just two novels and a fragment Before I analyse the basic themes and technical strengths and weaknesses of his novels it is necessary to survey briefly his novels one by one chronologically in order to discern his growth as a novelist

Prasad s first novel is *Kankal* which has a simple, realistic and tragic plot Devaniranjan, who loved Kishori madly in childhood, is terribly upset by the remembrance of his childhood days even when he has renounced the world and leads the life of a sage As a matter of fact, obsessed by the sense of self defeat he escapes from life On the other hand, due to an unfathomable desire to have a child Kishori destroys her chaste womanhood Niranjan is irresistibly excited by her unfulfilled youth He is terribly torn by an inner conflict between physical love and renunciation and in the end takes to the path of active association with and interest in, mundane affairs Owing to his over materialistic tendencies, Kishori s husband is indifferent to all this Consequently the lovers lead their lives freely without any restrictions On the other hand, Mangal a member of a volunteer corps, is moved by the helpless ness and miseries of the young prostitute Tara and endeavours to bring about a reconciliation between her and her lost family but when he finds her completely rejected by the society he takes her responsibility on himself The intimacy between the two results naturally in the husband wife relationship But mental imbalance and fear of the public opinion lead him to desert and run away from the pregnant Tara who after making an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide, again lives a life of helplessness and miseries She gives birth to a child takes to begging and seeks shelter at Kishori s Mangal comes in contact with Kishori s son Vijaya, during his hostel life Vijaya becomes very intimate with Tara living in the disguise of Yamuna and he also becomes jealous of Mangal who is very busy in organizing and directing a residential teaching institution Jilted by Yamuna the extremist Vijaya becomes mentally deranged and anti establishment He behaves very freely with Ghanti and expresses his faith in Christianity Unruly and indisciplined he incurs the displeasure of Kishori and Niranjan and leaves for Mathura Ghanti s predicament and distress make him seek shelter in the Church and also make him a painter Yamuna goes to the hermitage of Svami

Krishnasharana at Vrindavan Mangal is suspected and is exiled from there Yamuna also leaves the hermitage protesting against Vijaya and Ghanti s love Shrichandra, the husband of Kishori, is given to vices and indulges in adultery with Chanda Angry with Kishori, Niranjan at last renounces the world, and sets out in search of Vijaya Shrichandra and Kishori are reconciled again Injuring severely Nawab who is cruel and wicked to Ghanti Vijaya absconds for fear of being sentenced to death But luckily the court gives the judgment in his favour largely due to the support of several men In the forest Vijaya passes his days in the disguise of 'Naye Gal studies at the school founded by Mangal ' Bharat Sangh is established by the efforts of Gosvamiji Mangal sees the dying Kishori for the last time as an ascetic Yamuna earns her and Vijaya s bread by doing physical work Mangal and Gal get married Vijava is very close to death and one day he dies of starvation The workers of 'Bharat Sangh' get ready to perform the funeral ceremony Poor Yamuna arranges the shroud by getting pay in advance The novel ends on a very tragic and depressing note Mangal sees a shabbily dressed woman sitting beside a helpless dead skeleton with her veil soaked in tears

Kankal gives an idea of the realities of Prasad s age and of the change in his social outlook Naturally, Nand Dulare Vajapeyi has rightly called it a realistic novel[1] Surely it exposes boldly the weaknesses of the society No character in it is able to maintain morality from the beginning to the end and is not without inner weaknesses It presents everyman as a bastard a hybrid (or cross breed) and a child of sin and every reformer as corrupt and aberrant Such a living skeleton of society has not been portrayed anywhere else in Hindi literature It is quite a thoughtful work in which the entire aristocracy has been looked at with suspicion and every ideal has been put to the strictest possible test Such a picture of the distressed and afflicted humanity terribly shakes the whole being of a man and creates a kind of wrath and acrimony in him, thus causing in him a deep distrust of the entire social fabric The novel evidences Prasad s intense emotional experience, sensibility and power of minute observation Disclosing the secret of the weakness of every well accepted belief the novelist lashes out against it with full force and fury The setting up of Bharat Sangh towards the end of the narrative evinces his positive approach embodying the reformatory form of the corrupt caste system The novel fully

brings out the author s bold, revolutionary attitude towards society The protagonist of the novel Vijaya is a staunch enemy of Hinduism and communalism His free thinking and behaviour are on the verge of extremity In truth he does not want to crush the natural and tender feelings of young age and that is why his carefree youth is restless for gratification The novel artistically shows the sordid reality and perversion of society, it spotlights childwidowhood *craving for children the corrupt men of religion prostitution* and the basic urges behind the man woman relationship Daringly, the novelist presents love much higher than a matter of routine, and attacks the tradition of professional marriage, which makes man lifeless No doubt from the social angle the characters of the novel are bastards and morally indecent, but they also create a small universe of pure and serene love and beauty In Vijaya, the living skeleton of society there is an amalgam of variegated immoral indecent and impracticable ways and complexities but at the same time we see the corrupt practices at holy places the immoral and degrading acts of the representatives of religion, etc In short the novel reflects at once Prasad s bitter criticism of society and his revolutionary desire to purge it The end of the novel is doubtless very depressing and tragic

Prasad s second novel *Titali*, marks a departure from his first novel exhibiting a different facet of his novelistic art Its plot is derived from village life Shaila returns to India from London in the company of Indradeva whose aristocratic joint family is internally opposed to her, and there ensues a sort of conspiracy against her The breach of filial ties and the split in the family throw Indradeva into terrible agony, anguish and anger He grows indifferent to the family property and endeavours to become self dependent Out of a sheer inner urge Shaila is absorbed in the plan for village uplift She comes in contact with Titali who is the foster daughter of Ramanath living in his hermitage Despite all external oppositions she marries Madhua (Madhuvan) the companion of her childhood by the blessings of Ramanath, but her married life does not turn out to be a happy one Indulged in the mutual conflicts of the villagers, Madhuvan punishes the tyrants and absconds for fear of punishment During this period Titali with all the strength of her womanhood starts a school and earns her and her son s livelihood for years However throughout she, like an ideal wife, patiently and keenly awaits the return of Madhuvan who

repents for his acts done under provocation After facing the bitter, complex situations and their consequences, he at last returns to his family life, the only true place of repose in life The novel concludes with ample indications of the happy married life of Titali and Madhuvan

Titali is the manifestation of Prasad s affirmative vision of life Though it is the recreation of the common, familiar life and is realistic like *Kankal* its realism is idealistic for its end is not depressing and nihilistic, but constructive and positive Instead of presenting a satiric and ironic view of society, it offers a sympathetic outlook on society Surely the novelist does not draw a curtain over the sordid realities and distortions of life but he makes every thing offer a constructive and positive attitude towards life The novel demonstrates his concept of womanhood and his ideal of Indian wife It is saturated with emotionalism, which forms the basis of a truly happy married life The characters in it are ordinary, vigorous and earthly creatures, whose thoughts, feelings and actions are simple and familiar Obviously the background of the novel is real life and its realism is solid and earthly

The novelist depicts the contemporary village life fairly well and portrays every aspect of it on the basis of emotional experience The novel gives just sporadic indications of the poverty and economic gaps in the village life, and does not exhibit fully the emotional and mental life of the helpless masses *suffering terribly in the money dominated social system* nevertheless, its vivid portrayal of the problems of family life in Indian society is highly commendable It analyses the varied problems of practical life and unequivocally accentuates the importance of economic factors in life Rejecting summarily the feudalistic system this sublime work of art is a plea in favour of agricultural life and the significance of hardwork As it is highly poetic it does not possess the transparent depth of the great writings of Prem Chand still it comprehensively scrutinizes the contemporary social problems and the novelist s sensibility does not weaken anywhere What is very remarkable about this novel is that it is the first artistic attempt in Hindi fiction to present the synthesis of Western materialism and Eastern spiritualism It demonstrates that this synthesis is the best means to achieve universal welfare Even today it looks very modern in that it focuses on the disintegration of family in the modern society governed by money It reveals Prasad s preoccupation with the bitter emotional

experiences of life, the decay of love and fellow feeling, the complexity of individual consciousness, and the economic uncertainty and slavery of woman The novelist considers man s terrible tendency of hoarding wealth as the principal cause of the predicament and miserable plight of society It is this which causes mean selfishness in men The author artistically offers a solution to these baffling and complex social problems and thus evinces his healthy and positive attitude towards life

Iravati is Prasad s last, but incomplete literary work In fact, Prasad had an inborn predilection for India s golden past and hence when he felt fatigued and sad while striving to find a solution to the fearful contemporary social problems he naturally turned to the past for regaining his mental emotional and creative vigour *Iravati* is thus a historical novel which has an artistic blending of philosophy and imagination The story of the novel in short, runs like this Charmed by Iravati, the Emperor Brahaspatimitra, forcibly admits her to a Buddhistic monastery, and there begins his clash with Agnimitra, Ira s former lover Iravati inadvertently defies the extreme compassion of the Buddhists now and then Agnimitra is accused of abducting Iravati and is punished The daughter of Nandavansh Kalindi organizes Sivastikadal' with the motive of revenge and by deceitful means succeeds in getting Agnimitra associated with this cunning conspiracy Her father the chief magistrate of Magadh, inspires and urges Agnimitra to serve the state Just then the Greek invasion is expected and there is every possibility of a defeat due to the weakness in military strength Naturally Chakravarti Kharvel is requested to co operate By chance all the characters meet at distinguished Dhanadatta s and at this point the narrative is left incomplete due to the novelist s sad demise On the basis of the indirect indications of the movement of the plot only this much can be guessed that the revolt of the government employees, who are the supporters of spiritualism against the Emperor Brihadrath will turn out to be successful that Pushyamitra will establish a strong administration that Ira s and Agnimitra s doubtful re union will take place, and that the swift speedy Kalindi s conspiracy will meet failure

The novel's central theme is the triumph of the theory of Eternal Bliss as the summum bonum of life ('*Anandavad*') over the non spiritual, materialistic Bauddha philosophy As it is incomplete, the writer s final inference is not clear in absolutely definite terms,

but the movement of thought and story doubtlessly points to the above conclusion In its limited scope, it has in it the seeds of a great, sublime masterpiece Through the theory of basic, eternal harmony (*samarasya siddhant*) of Brahmachari, a major character in the novel, Prasad presents his unflinching faith in reconstruction and recreation The book depicts the intense mutual conflicts between the Buddhists and the Brahmans in the domain of sectarian philosophy at a time in history when the Maurya Empire is in its last stage of decline This clash between the Brahmans and the Buddhists gradually results in sedition, a revolt against the king The novel abounds in very bold incidents, many of which at times appear miraculous and magical and hence far from reality The core of the theme is related to Iravati, and its thought-content is very relevant to our times The background material is based on historical facts Most of the events are of great historic fame though, of course Prasad has made use of his inventive power here and there The story has been derived from *Malavikagnimitram* and the *Puranas*, but the character delineation is Prasad s own In place of Kalidas s insignificant, jealous Ira, Prasad has created a highly aesthetic and tender hearted female character in Iravati Brahmachari is a very significant character in the novel, he is the symbol of the instinctive way of life (*pravrittimarg*), and is the incarnation of healthy Indian thought and cultural heights The novel presents a comparative analysis of Indian aesthetic tendency and the Buddhist philosophy of extreme sorrow (*atidukhavad*), thus offering a fusion of the pleasures of life and self restraint Also, it examines the intellectualism of the logicians (*vivekavadi*) Its cultural background is soaked in historical facts Prasad has fully grasped the very soul of Indian life and has at the same time recreated the glory of India s wonderful past by dint of his creative genius It is in this sense that the novel according to Dr Nagendra, is Prasad s best work of fiction [2] Obviously *Iravati* deserves a close, comprehensive study from varied angles

II

After a brief survey of Prasad s novels I pass on to analyse the thought contents the themes of his fiction, embodying his vision of life and his power of profound thinking One very patent theme

running through *Kankal* and *Titali* is social resurrection or reconstruction Prasad was a careful observer of the life of his age and was an exceptionally profound thinker *Kankal* shatters the rigid social conventions, the religious and spiritual rigidity, and the time-honoured and age old belief about the individual and community Mangal an important character in the novel, pungently remarks about the legal world of today that the laws are usually negative and the good deeds are very few while sins are in abundance [3] Again, he observes that the world is confronted with the terrible problem of food, but the Hindu race is still absorbed in primitive, uncultured activities Another character in the novel, Vijaya, exposing the social anomalies, bitterly satirizes the Hinduism in the same vein when he states that most of the Hindu society is in utter misery and poverty its culture is full of anomalies and its institutions are meaningless and useless, it is intellectually bankcrupt and the leaders of its religion earn their livelihood by terrifying the masses [4] The scene of the free for all among the beggars and dogs on the occasion of the sumptuous ritualistic feast at Vijaya s exemplifies the kind, merciful religious feelings of the starving society However, the novelist's reformative zeal makes all this living and positive, for he believes in preservation and creation and not in destruction Revolt is in fact man s destructive process the healthy attitude is constructive and positive To quote Prasad lack of self-control and weakness of character lead to revolt while patience ultimately rules human nature, and society is just an expression of human tendencies [5] This lays bare the novelist's affirmative vision of life He clearly states that the reformative movement should not be detached and silent but should be very active and all embracing because the world is deaf and we have to cry to make it hear us [6] With this aim the plan for the ' Bharat Sangh is conceived at Svami Krishnasharan s hermitage to achieve purity healthy caste feelings and genuine social unity and to establish true religion ethics, social control and respect for the innately tender hearted woman The individual's limited measured knowledge and teaching may be confusing but the well organized endeavour of an institution is indubitably very useful and effective The writer stresses that the mean selfishness of people does not profane and spoil it it is quite easy to establish an actually good and healthy society by means of such organizations Inevitably the novel evidences Prasad s conviction that individualistic thinking and

idealism should be replaced by ideal reformative institutions

Titali delineates the explicit conflict between idealism and realism On the one hand, it records vividly Tahsiladar s tyranny towards and conspiracy against the farmers and his evil designs against Sherakot, Banjaria and Dhamapur, on the other hand, it elaborates Shaila s great reformative zeal and work which generate reawakening in people Fed up with the London life seething with people and wanting in genuine human feelings, she completely mixes up with Indian farmers in whose life of hard labour, unswerving trust and unflinching contentment she discerns peace in fact, in them she discovers the true life In short the novel embodies the writer s intense desire for vast improvement in the lot of Indian masses and for the future welfare of Indian society as a whole He clearly suggests that some accomplished educated men should settle down in villages, resisting the temptations of city life in order to bring about a genuine social reconstruction and resurrection [7] His exposition of the problem of urbanization and his solution to the problem of social reconstruction in India presented in the early thirties of the present century certainly evinces his wonderful foresight and right thinking

Prasad is very seriously concerned with the right place of woman in society He is deeply moved by her miserable plight which he describes by remarking pungently that woman has no place in society and is only the tail of man and what is very queer about this tail is that sometimes it can easily be set aside to live in separation [8] He sees the life of Hindu woman as a curse, and very painfully observes that the creation of women is only an expression of God s irritation [9] Throughout her life she has to die Unable to bear the tyranny of man, she at last feels constrained to burn herself to death like Padmini and men like Allauddin scatter away the burnt ashes [10] According to Prasad the entire human life of today is only a satire on her modesty and helplessness [11] She has to stick to one religion only and that is the capacity to bear blows, physical emotional and mental Woman has a natural right for love and she is made to have love either through the dignified way of marriage or through debauchery Prasad s novels not only show the extremely painful life of woman but also preach a good deal to improve her lot In *Iravati* through Dhanadatta, the novelist elaborates the duty and responsibility of a noble and chaste married woman He states that a woman who has no patience and tole

rance, cannot protect or maintain her modesty and virtues He defines the married woman as one who is always obsessed with the desire for the welfare of her husband s family who offers food to everyone in the house without caring for herself, and who is generally cheerful and above complaint and grudge [12] Prasad is averse to the modern intolerant woman s insolent and indecent attempts at achieving complete emancipation He does not consider the insolence of woman useful and fruitful in any way He affirms that woman will remain woman and what she is trying to do out of a deep sense of restlessness and grief is not true to her inborn nature —it is only a revolt and therefore much impertinence and rebellion is not proper and necessary for a real reform in her condition [13] What is necessary for improving her lot is that she should be emancipated from economic slavery Her personal needs must be fulfilled Prasad is of the view that woman needs adequate amount of wealth, for when she is left all alone without the care and protection of man she has nobody to help her except wealth [14] Indradeva in *Titali* rightly asserts that every family is decrepit and disorganized because of the conflict between woman s love and revolt and our joint family is necessarily a failure resulting from this economic slavery of theirs [15] Prasad has offered practical suggestion pertaining to re forms in women s life and family through several of his characters

Closely allied to this is the theme of family feeling in Prasad's novels In *Titali*, there are mainly two families Indradeva has everything but not co operation and happiness On the contrary, in the small family of Titali there is nothing but mutual love Inevitably, the members of the latter s family are really happy, fighting easily against the odds and deficiencies of life by dint of their mutual love and co operation Prasad laments the pitiable and painful life in the joint family—the breaking away of its units and links [16] An Indian is born and brought up amidst family love and tenderness and hence the feelings of sympathy co operation and love are also very strong in him due to the traditional culture The consciousness of Hinduism is at a continuous decline Man has great attachment for his small narrow family, having little concern with life beyond his family In Prasad s opinion the Hindu down trodden for the centuries has lost his collective consciousness and thus while people of other castes and tribes eat fine and sumptuous food in the utensils made of ordinary or Chinese clay the Hindu takes a very ordinary food like 'sattu in a silver plate [17] In fact at

times the novelist s attitude towards the contemporary Hindu family life is quite pessimistic

Another theme in Prasad's novels is the dignity and greatness of culture and philosophy They logically examine the cultural ele ments The discussion of Indian and Western cultures civilizations and sciences between Indradeva and Ramanath in *Titali* is of great significance in this regard Comparing and contrasting the Indian and European cultures Prasad through Ramanath emphasizes the value of Indian spiritualism for bringing about mental equilibrium in people for their permanent welfare, which is not attainable through the machine civilization of the West Ramanath further asserts that the West is only creating a physical body which will have life only by means of Indian spiritualism, and thus the East and West can have a genuine unity which will inevitably result in the spontaneous happy flow of human life [18] This synthesis of the two should be the unique, final truth of human existence Prasad is averse to mental control over man, for it causes the narrowness of thinking In India life is not merely struggle, but the attainment of the indivisible joy, the bliss Addressing to Shaila Ramanath states that while in the West people have made not only life but even land, water and sky as the centre of clashes and wars in India we are preached to wage war only against the devilish feelings and thoughts which are the enemy of soul [19] Prasad rejects the Vedanta which makes man indifferent to and disinterested in the worldly existence by labelling it a mere illusion According to him it is communal, just cold logic The real Vedanta is something very practical No doubt, its basis is individualism but it aims at protecting man from the rigid social conventions The freedom of the individual creates a strong sense of equality in him Life cannot be all struggle and conflict for struggle leads men to separation and destruction while life is co operation and creation Even in Christian religion which has the Arvan message, there is stress on mutual co operation and service Human life abounds in varied desires This is why Indradev thinks that it is not desirable and useful to eliminate the colourful desires from the beautiful picture of life, and to turn it into a mere sketch or line drawing there must appear in it the golden virtues and dark vices, the light and shade of pleasure and pain and the red and green of shame and cheerfulness [20]

Lastly, Prasad s novels are an expression of his philosophy of Eternal Bliss as the summum bonum of life His concept of Eternal

Bliss stands for the creation of joy and welfare and the elimination of grief and anguish Enthusiasm for bliss as he asserts in *Iravati* is life [1] The feeling of bliss ends every kind of sorrow completely The moment man attains it sin does not dare come near him Brahmachari vociferously and emphatically asserts it Imaginary sorrow and extremes of reasoning are great hindrances in man s way of achieving Eternal Bliss Brahmachari claims that his thinking is not lame, it enables man to live blissfully and this state of bliss is not antagonistic to any man living in any state of life in it give and take do not have separate entity and are not in conflict with each other [23] He downright discards the Buddhist philosophy of liberation from existence Rejecting the Buddhist doctrine of nihilism and freedom from materialism Prasad propounds the theory of Eternal Bliss and *Iravati* is invaluable in this context In it he asserts that in the interest of humanity we have to revive the ancient Indian culture and things associated with it which we consider injurious and worthless because of extreme logic and reasoning in them [4] To avoid the death of our intellectual pride we will have to stress the value of the theory of Eternal Bliss [25] The novel completely rejects cowardice and despondency which we practice in the name of non violence and transiency of life Thus Prasad accentuates self reliance and self confidence which infuse into man zeal, courage and hope

III

An analysis of the major themes in Prasad s novel should necessarily be followed by an examination of his novelistic techniques – viz plot structure characterization atmosphere, style narrative technique etc The plot of *Kankal* is taken from the visible ordinary world The events are related to the holy places such as Haridwar Mathura Kashi Vrindavan etc With the main plot are woven loosely several contextual secondary plots The autobiography of Gal s mother is one such secondary plot which despite the novelist s best efforts to link it closely with the main plot remains episodic and disconnected and somewhat redundant from the structural point of view The main plot is built upon the conflict between social and religious tendencies The plot structure of this novel is elaborate The variegated activities of a fairly good number

of characters make it bulky, and a little misshaped The organiza tion of events is at times unnatural In fact, the plot structure of the novel is not compact and well knit The reunion of long sepa rated characters is rather unconvincing The same character appears repeatedly as Gulenar, Tara and Yamuna respectively and unite the scattered threads of the plot Likewise, the threads of the narrative are unnecessarily expanded by the introduction of an aunt a beggar and abnormal characters Obviously, the plot abounds in coin cidences and all this makes it unnatural, though it has certainly spontaneous and absorbing movement The hermitage at Vrindavan is the meeting point of most of the major characters and the threads of the plot are controlled from there In a word structural ly, *Kankal* is not a good flawless work

The subject matter of *Titali* is derived from village life, and the novel paints the social history of the decline of feudal system Also, it portrays the miserable condition of villages and the disintegration of joint families The novelist s individualistic consciousness and its personal experience find free expression in this book The plot embodies the individualistic views about romantic love and convic tions of life It successfully analyses and realistically presents the philosophical schools of India and Europe Maintaining his love for the old the novelist establishes the validity of new convictions and beliefs thus portraying effectively the conflicts emanating from complex social situations No doubt the plot organization is some what over elaborate and has some apparent absurd joints here and there but on the whole it is balanced and proportionate The novelist remarkably succeeds in fusing into an artistic, compact whole the village farming community and the city people the conditions of the working class and the feudal class the deteriora ting tendency of joint families the bitterness of Indian society and the successful plan for the social renaissance The plot has natural movement and interest from the beginning to the end and it con cludes with a happy note soaked in curiosity and wonder

The plot of *Iravati* is based on ancient Indian history The basic story has the support of historians like Majumdar Smith and Jayaswal it belongs to the Mauryan age Even the *Puranas* abound in references to Vrihadrath Shatadhanush Kalinga Chakravarti Kharvel Pushyamitra Agnimitra and others The main story pivots around Brahmachari and it progresses through him The plot structure of *Iravati* is indubitably well organized fascinating and

dynamic. Sometimes strange, unnatural happenings occur making the narrative spasmodically dominated by the miraculous and magical elements There is movement and boldness in it throughout But the plot organization does not suffer from long digressions and redundant material As it is incomplete it is difficult to pronounce a definite, final judgment on it but even then its artistic and structural excellence is conspicuous and hence it cannot be underestimated

IV

Prasad s characterization is effective and artistic Every character in *Kankal* suffers from human weaknesses The hero Vijaya is extremist, haughty impudent and iconoclastic Niranjan suffers from hypocrisy self affliction and vanity and Kishori from lust wilfulness and the desire for self purification Mangal moves helplessly between strength and weakness, and the novelist describes him as a sin enwrapped in purity and enlightenment a definite truth enveloped in weakness [26] As a matter of fact, the novel evinces greatness in weak characters, and weak traits in great characters It reveals the decline of idealism, and the morally depraved people s sincere endeavour to rise to dignity and nobility But these characters do not propagate anything nor do they raveal any definite ideal of the writer, they neither enunciate any theory nor lead to any definite conclusion Vijaya is an extremist everywhere He is governed by the licentiousness and impertinence of youth Though extremenly intellectual, he has no time to think wisely and reasonably on any matter Consequently, he ceaselessly rolls down the road of corruption and degradation, and does not try to stay and stop In the end disillusioned by everything and every relationship Vijaya—the son of a millionaire—dies of starvation His will power and free thinking are at times highly commendable He does not approve of social restrictions for he does not fear either sin or public opinion Inevitably he can make a bold unconventional statement that he believes in free love and those who consider unmarried life as animal like and licentious are absolutely wrong, for the true marriage is the genuine union of hearts and so there is no need for mediation or recitation of Vedic hymns for it [27]

Madhuvan in *Titali* loses all sense of duty due to his destructive activities and inclinations The novelist repeatedly refers to it and

avers that Madhuvan is opposed to social order and system"[8] He commits crime and in an attempt to hide it he daily commits new crimes *He returns to his early initial state of life after involving in* variegated activities he quarrels in the village, beats Chaubev runs away with the money bag of the priest after strangling him, meets Maina, works in the coal mines, flees to Calcutta after killing Chirkit works with Biru, becomes rickshaw puller, attacks Maina and Shyam Mohan and is again imprisoned, serves people in the fair etc etc Titali is infused with unparallelled zeal for dignified womanhood and duty, while Ramanath is saturated with the sublime notion of high ideals and the sense of strict self denial and self sacrifice In fact Titali has a resplendant, inspiring and captivating personality Miseries and tragedies of her early life—her infancy in the midst of starvation childhood without affection and youth without the honeyed love of Madhua, the companion of her childhood—make her so unhappy and helpless that for quite sometime she fails to live a normal life Her strong sense of self defeat is absolutely natural and true to human nature But in her the sense of self reliance is always strong She does not accept her smallness or insignificance before a person exhibiting self importance She fights against the fearful extreme misfortunes and odds of life, and evidences immense capacity courage and power to fight She cannot bear the exemplification of vain glory and the importance of the tyrannical society She tells Shaila that she wants to bear her sorrows and joys herself for she has met with utter disappointment in her efforts to seek help here and there and everywhere she wants to extract joy from her helplessness and misery, and does not want any one to love her[39] She has led a life of dignity and nobility and hence says to her son Mohan that her mother has not done any such work as he may ever be put to shame[30] Prasad s art of characterization is very natural and is always in consonance with the situation, there is always a harmony between the characters and the situation

The basic purpose of the novel *Kankal* is well indicated by its very title it aims at portraying the actual picture of society *Titali* presents the constructive side of the future form of society *Iravati* enunciates the theory of Eternal Bliss through philosophical conflicts Obviously, from the viewpoint of purpose his novels are great works of art, and their artistic aims are absolutely acceptable and convincing in their contexts

Prasad creates a suitable atmosphere for his narratives, and is particularly skilful in creating appropriate surroundings for the situations and events He sets his three novels in three different periods *Kankal* portrays the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the incidents are mostly related to the holy places and the reformative centres *Titali* on the other hand, gives the glimpses of feudal system and plans for the uplift of villages The influences of the reformative movements and renaissance are clearly perceptible on the life depicted in this novel *Iravati* has remote history as its background Portraying the ideological and philosophical conflicts in the India of the Shunga age it reveals and accentuates the value and desirability of the philosophy of Eternal Bliss for the modern times

The language and style of Prasad s novels are usually in consonance with the plot and characters Though the stamp of the writer s poetic genius is present everywhere, yet the language is generally simple natural effective and figurative Owing to the thought contents of the novel the style of *Iravati* is undoubtedly often philosophical and difficult However on the whole, Prasad s style in his novels is effective artistic and delightful

V

Prasad's short stories fall under two groups the early and the later With the fables and short episodic narratives of *Chitradhar,* he made his debut as a short story writer and soon attained a certain stature with the publication of the next two collections, *Chhaya* and *Pratidhvani* After that came out chronologically, *Akashadip* *Andhi* and *Indrajal* which are surely the writer s representative mature and great works The progress of his art of short story writing from "Gram to Salavati is indeed very remarkable and significant The growth of Prasad should be seen not only from the angle of technique but also from that of theme since he according to the noted critic Laksmi Narayan Lal is the only Hindi short story writer whose story is governed by thought-content more than by technique [31] Naturally in this short survey of his stories I shall examine his early and later stories separately in two different sections

Prior to the stories published in the collection entitled *Andhi,* Prasad composed only a few fables or short episodic narratives

(called in Hindi *Akhyayika*) brought out under the title *Chitradhar* and so *Andhi* is his first collection of short stories The stories of this collection are the manifestation of the first flowering of his romanticism They contain the immature love dreams of the young romantic poet In the words of the author, these short episodic narratives are only the shadows or images of the episodes they narrate [3] No doubt they contain the seeds of his great later fiction, but they are just initial attempts of the author to write fiction and hence they are not very remarkable either in plot organization or in the art of minute character delineation Nevertheless they also reveal the young growing artist s concern with ordinary life his clear grasp of emotional life, and his interest in re creating historic annals ' Gram ', which appeared in this collection is Prasad s first original story and is doubtless very prominent among the earliest original stories in Hindi It is based on realism and its characters are painted artistically and clearly Its subject matter is simple and ordinary but it is saturated with curiosity and wonder Its style is highly emotional and deliberate The story Tansen is a romantic love story which is remarkable for the graphic emotional portrayal of nature and atmosphere Another notable story in the collection is Chanda which is a love story, describing a heinous murder out of jealousy The romantic atmosphere permeates the entire story Rasiya Balam is built upon the ideal of the legend of Shiri Farhad and hence the scenes and situations are at times very poetic picturesque and colourful For instance there is the lovely scene of the first blossoming of jasmine buds at the touch of the first rays of the peeping morning sun Sharanagat is an expression of the author's cultural consciousness, while Sikandar ki Shapath marks the beginning of his tradition of historical narratives The other notable stories in the collection are Chittaur Uddhar , Ashok Gulam Jahanara and Madanamrinalini The last one with which the collection concludes is a touching portrait of the unsuccessful sacrifice of love

Prasad s next collection of short stories *Pratidhvani* evinces the growth of his mind and art No doubt it is marked by the weaknesses in plot structure and characterization but it is very success ful in artistic delineation of feelings thoughts and situations The style is mature and refined The volume displays the sprout of Prasad s wonderful genius Influenced by *Gitanjali* the story

"Prasad', explores the theme of dedication and self offering, and though weak in plot, it is fascinating and impressive 'Gudar Sain is the portrait of a liberated soul, who is the living jewel of the great spiritual tradition While "Gudari men Lal is about a self-respecting old woman who does not barter away her self respect for the alms of handful grains, the story "Aghori ka Moh" paints life s complexities showing the irony of circumstances "Pap ki Parajaya" is a beautiful story dealing with lust beauty and duty Suggestively it presents the author s self experienced inner conflict "Is beauty a thing of worship only, and not meant for use or taste? [33] "Sahayog' treats married life, particularly some of the basic truths related to man woman relationship while Pathar ki Pukar' is based on history and 'Usa Par ka Yogi' is the writer s first story saturated with mysticism 'Karuna ki Vijaya deals with the national theme pathetically, 'Khandahar ki Lipi and Chakravarti ka Stambh treat history 'Kalavati ki Shiksha abounds in the savings of a mature erotic uneducated woman, 'Dukhiya' pictures the pathetic life of a poor self respecting woman and "Pratima is an emotional portrayal of a God of temple symbolizing reverence love and faith The volume concludes with the exquisite story "Pralaya', which is a fine blending of imagination, art and philosophy, foreshadowing Prasad s great epic *Kamayani* It ends on a note of hope and good wishes Obvious these early stories are indispensable for the understanding of Prasad s fiction as they reveal the various stages in the growth of his mind and art

Plot structure in Prasad s early stories is significant The plots of the stories in *Chhaya* and *Pratidhvani* can be classified as descriptive symbolic and historic The plot in them can easily be analysed like a line drawing or a prose poetry It seldom has a problem or a particular elaborate thought The plot organization is quite often very commendable having both minuteness and suggestiveness 'Aghori ka Moh "Gudari men Lal and Karuna ki Vijaya' are stories with this kind of plot In the tradition of prose poetry Pralaya 'Dukhiya Kalavati ki Shiksha' etc are notable the subtle feelings of heart find spontaneous and eloquent expression in the right context in them The plot of Pralaya is very complex, but the philosophy presented through the images of feelings and thoughts is highly synthesized and the mysticism in its theme is extremely profound But other historical stories are well knit and have fluent movement Most of these early stories have some basic,

significant problem inspiring the writer to express emotional sensibility in the form of prose poetry It is through the images of feelings that the author portrays the innermost recesses of the heart In these stories the plot is somewhat abstract, and is not very clear and well organized, but socially they are saturated with definite meaning and significance Also they abound in unity and flow of thoughts and feelings 'Chanda and "Gram' exemplify these traits Perhaps, owing to the impact of Rabindranath Tagore Prasad has a perchant for history prose poetry and excessive emotional sensibility in most of the stories of *Pratidhvani* In two or three stories, there are slight indications of psycho-analysis too

Men and women in Prasad s early stories usually have sublime character and personality They embody basic human values They are emotional tender hearted and sometimes pathetic They are the models of love compassion and self sacrifice They experience a terrible inner conflict between forgiveness and revenge Most of Prasad s women are the symbols of ancient ideals but a few of them also embody modernity They evince revolutionary attitude against absurd social preventions and compulsions and are capable of making bold sacrifices The male characters are generally soaked in love and appear as a Messiah of unbounded love and self sacrifice However, they develop a sense of duty and social con sciousness as a result of the inspiration they derive from women Usually women are exceptionally youthful accomplished and bewitchingly beautiful Like women, men are naturally emotional and dedicated to love They are kind dignified and extra ordinarily self sacrificing Usually, Prasad s characters are lovers of art and poetry They have in their disposition innocence tenderness and sensitivity, and hence are very interesting to the reader The charac ters in imaginative and symbolic stories are more secretive and mystical than those in other kinds of stories The stress on perso nality is of secondary importance in these stories Several of the characters are simply an incarnation of certain human feelings and emotions The range of Prasad s characterization is not very wide and we do not come across a great variety of characters in his stories The motive force behind them is love and grief However he employs some of the well known techniques of character portra yal sometimes his technique is purely descriptive and direct as in ' Indrajal sometimes it is symbolic as in Chitravaley Patthar

sometimes he delineates characters mainly through incidents as in "Anbola', and sometimes he portrays them primarily through dialogues as in "Akashadip' What is remarkable is that none of these techniques of character portrayal hampers or impairs the element of imagination and sensibility in them

The style of Prasad s earlier stories is emotional and realistic It is interesting throughout, and is as emotional and symbolic as that of prose poetry The writer begins his story either with the picture of a natural scene or with plot or with mutual discussions For instance "Dukhiya in *Pratidhvani* opens with the description of a natural scene and "Patthar ki Pukar with a discussion between two friends The plots of these stories are saturated with natural emotional sensitivity and the problem they deal with is not of great importance The plot in everyone of them is woven around some fundamental emotion or feeling Obviously there is little scope for a clear outline of proportionate growth in this technique We clearly mark in these stories the exposition of the theme the inner conflict and the climax and resolution According to Prasad, technique in a work of art should not be static Inevitably, the climax of Prasad s story is very emotional and evocative, and as such it not only moves the reader but also gives birth to a new theme or problem Often the writer creates the climax early in the story In these stories some psychological truth gets an artistic expression in the climax Their plots bring out ready wit or intellectual quickness, which is at once practical and artistic The minute subtleties of feelings are exquisitely delineated in them Universal truth, philosophy self sacrifice and compassion find natural expression in them, they are particularly remarkable for the artistic assertion of the compassion of Buddhism and the concept of the Eternal Bliss of the Aryan philosophy through the dialogues and actions of characters After making an exposition of the purpose and theme of the story, the writer concludes it with a highly emotive climax or crisis Some of his historical stories like 'Gulam and 'Ashok' are dominated by situations and coincidences, and in them emotionalism and poetic element are of secondary importance In a word Prasad s early stories are generally stories of characters and despite their numerous strengths as enumerated above, they are certainly not his representative stories either from the viewpoint of thought content or from the standpoint of technique

VI

Prasad s later stories which appeared in three volumes namely, *Andhi Indrajal* and *Akashadip*, are the high watermark of his fictional art true in them we find the full flowering of his art of story writing The plots of these stories are comparatively very emotional, thought provoking philosophical and artistic They are very vast in scope and are fully mature thematically and technically They contain the elements of prose poetry and line drawing They are comparatively very long and very rich in sensitivity "Andhi , ' Puraskar , Svarga ke Khandahar etc bear witness to it They are devoid of dramatic love characterizing the stories of *Chhaya*, and of adolescent emotionalism overflowing the tales of *Pratidhvani*

The plots of these later stories are highly artistic, and are built on the emotional plane of realism with the help of colourful imagination The canvas in some of these stories is very vast as for instance, the entire age is painted in ' Salavati The writer has presented his thematic inferences with commendable objectivity The aesthetic emotionalism of Prasad s poetic heart is in abundance in these stories but it contributes to the natural creative process and technique rather than to hamper and mar them it also helps to organize the action reaction thrill and inner conflict The inner conflict between duty and desire in Champa in ' Akashadip is a fine specimen of the writer s mature art The plots are usually natural and convincing Alongwith the absorbing narration of events Prasad concentrates upon the inner life and psycho analysis of his men and women In shorter stories this plane of emotional and inner life is mainly depicted symbolically there we find more poetic element than description and psycho analysis The plots have more suggestiveness than direct story element Evocativeness and abstraction characterize them from the beginning to the end And this is surely an exquisite mode of plot structure The typical boldness in 'Gunda is evident in the portrayal of the inner reality of man and of the realities of society This story is remarkable not only for its suggestiveness, but also for its artistic delineation of a social prob'em These later stories touch the sensitive reader s heart No doubt Prasad is not much concerned with the taste of the common people and this is a limitation of his art but his writings are commendable for their artistic excellence of high order Some of the tales like 'Andhi and Salavati are a bit unneces

sarily lengthy and at places the events are not well linked still they are not deficient in natural sensitivity and artistic effect, which are undoubtedly admirable features of these stories

The dialogues in these stories of Prasad s mature period are in consonance with the context and situation They reveal the writer s profundity of ideas and at the same time impart movement to the plot An exquisite poetic touch marks these dialogues, which fully express human sensibility and emotions Though at times quite leng thy, they have few parallels in Hindi literature so far as dramatic effectiveness and artistic excellence are concerned Placed between action, description and events they possess remarkable expressive ness and emotional grandeur Prasad is deeply influenced by philosophy and this is why his dialogues are saturated with humanism, compassion and pity Sometimes they abound in felt psychological experiences They are so rich in poetry that the development of the plot is occasionally hampered Intense emotional experience and powerful self expression make these stories lyrics in prose The predominance of thematic sensitivity in them relegate the situations and events to the secondary place ' Akashadip is a glaring speci men of this Bhikarin "Churivali ' Devadasi and Mamata are precious treasures of fictional writing on account of unfathom able sensitivity

From the viewpoint of characterization Prasad s later stories are highly artistic In them almost every important character is emo tional, compassionate and an aesthete Love dominates and thrills his whole being Interested in philosophy these characters are often serious thinkers torn by powerful inner conflicts Obviously they are more active internally rather than physically In the female characters one comes across a lovely synthesis of love beauty action duty and compassion They have the irresistibly attractive youth and the drunkenness of pain The overflowing youth of Mamata is the dumb portrait of the tragic world of a widow The agitated and grief stricken heart of Bela deeply moves a sensitive reader spontaneously Alongwith natural beauty, these characters are endowed with active and positive submission courage, sacrifice sensitiveness and other such virtues Their inner conflicts are em bedded in the realities of life Infinite love sacred sense of duty, terrible sense of revenge and immeasurable magnanimity and generosity are their ideals of life Champa s forgiveness and revengeful inner conflicts are artistically delineated in 'Akashadip this

sweet delicate lady is extremely stern in the matter of duty In these women we see the acme of the sense of duty and yet they are absolutely true to life Nira, Sujata, Madhulika and Salavati are in fact, the very incarnation of the eternal woman In these stories usually the male characters are comparatively of secondary importance still they are true ideals of genuine courage and fine sensibilities Arun Buddhagupta aud Abhaya are people in whom we can easily see the full flowering of human personality They are matchless in stability and strength of character Abhaya in 'Salavati is dedicated to the sublime ideal of love while Arun s bold expedition and Buddhagupta s dauntless courage leave an indelible stamp on the reader s mind Gunda is a unique instance of character portrayal Nevertheless, in these stories men, on the whole are weak and shadowy in comparison with women

Prasad s later stories fully reveal his command of dialogues and narrative technique The elements of Indian dramatic style are usually present in his technique of story telling Often he opens a story with dialogues with a view to creating the dramatic effect The beginning of 'Churivali or ' Akashadip evidences it This method is well suited to the revelation of characters and inner conflicts Without damaging the elements of curiosity and thrill the writer successfully employs the first person singular point of view in ' Chitravale Patthar and 'Beri In Devadasi ', he resorts to the epistolary method of narration After introducing the problem he presents the main theme and the conflict emanating from it Salavati ' and Devarath are exquisitely built around inner conflicts, bringing out the truth of feelings The climax is followed by a brief resolution revealing a similar conclusion In Akashadip and Andhi ', the writer is deeply concerned with natural sensitivity, and consequently the element of surprise is relegated to a secondary place in them The climax embodies a psychological truth

Lastly the later stories of Prasad exhibit his skilfull and artistic use of language His competence to wield the power of words enables him to express easily and effectively even the most intense feelings philosophical thoughts and psychological realities When he deals with history and culture his style becomes highly suggestive poetic and artistic Owing to his wonderful subtle insight he has been able to make a very effective use of the words and terms particularly related to philosophy, history, culture etc What is remarkable about the style in these stories is the appropriate close

relationship between the matter and the manner, the content and the expression His style fully suits the complex problems, intense sensibilities and profound emotional experiences treated in these stories In dealing with the realities of life, his style is direct and matter of fact but it becomes philosophical and mystical while treating serious and sublime situations and moments Although in "Salavati' occasionally obscure and difficult because of too much philosophy and complex working of imagination in simple and sweet scenes, his style is very juicy, figurative, poetic and delightful, every word of it conveys a lot

To conclude, Prasad's fiction fully brings out his highly original creative genius, art and ideas and is saturated with philosophy, imagination and emotional experience It presents the romantic and aesthetic poet as primarily a social being It embodies his vision of life, and reveals his power of analysing his age and his tendency to accentuate the eternal in society As there is predominance of individual life in it it may well be labelled as individualistic fiction But together with individualism it exhibits the writer s social consciousness As a matter of fact, it is an amalgam of the reality of life and individualistic thinking Besides, it depicts the individual psychologically While it portrays individual consciousness as something essentially internal and self centred, it shows the social consciousness of the middle class people in its entirety Prasad is more than a romantic idealist in these works he is quite often a realist out and out Fiction to him is essentially social, and he does not attempt to escape from the religious and commonplace complexities of life Dr Nagendra justly affirms that his feelings pertaining to the external life are at times somewhat bitter and sharp, and that he had boldly exposed the worthlessness of several of the existing social institutions [34] But at the same time these works are not devoid of sweet, romantic love and aesthetic experience His outlook on life has helped in correcting and improving the society, it nowhere violates the norm and ideals Even from the viewpoint of technique his fiction is highly commendable displaying his command of characterization plot structure, dialogues atmosphere narrative method and style Inevitably his novels and short stories are indispensable for a correct and comprehensive understanding of his mind and art and of Hindi fiction as a whole

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Theory and Practice of Dramatic Art

DR. VISHWANATH MISHRA

Jayashankar Prasad was a Romantic, and romantically he perceived the spectacle of life, not with his senses but through his inner vision. Prem Chand saw things as they are, Prasad cast a romantic glow over them. Reality emerges in his works not in its stark naked form, but always drenched in emotions and dressed in the rich costumes of his colourful fancy. Art reflects life—life as seen by the artist with his mind's eye. The world that we come across in Prasad's works is not a mere shadow of outward phenomena but their imaginative reconstruction. His plays as also the basic principles of his dramatic philosophy amply illustrate this fact. His plays are a class unto themselves; so is his dramatic conception. But then, he left behind precious little in the name of theory. He nowhere explained in detail the creative process that went into the making of his dramas. The author of the present critique went straight to the plays and had to depend largely on a critical analysis of the text.

Being a romantic free thinker, Prasad followed the established rules of neither the ancient Indian nor the Western dramaturgy. He revolted against both. He had seen, known and accepted the world in the broader light of his own inner experience. That is how he presents it in his plays also. Being an introvert he put more emphasis on the probing of the mental reactions of his characters than on what happens in the external world. Far from being the reflection of outer reality his dramas are, as it were, a saga of man's inner self.

Conflict is the soul of drama. Life for Prasad was a continuous struggle, a battlefield of conflicting forces—the internal conflict being more important than the external. Yet the latter too does not remain neglected in this plays. At one place we witness external forces warring among themselves, but at other someone standing against the world in order to safeguard his faith and convictions and yet at another a war being waged in the same mind between different thoughts, emotions and beliefs. However it is the inner conflict that dominates.

The essay Theory and Practice of Dramatic Art is translated from Hindi by J P Savita

Prasad s vision of life was very broad Highly sensuous as he was, he was unusually responsive to Beauty in its varied forms Beauty he loved in its varied manifestation—human natural, sensuous and even suprasensuous With beauty he accepted ugliness also Both co exist in the universe They are two aspects of the same 'Virat We see this relativism informing his life s philosophy At one place he avers Impurity is the measure of Purity, Pain is a comment on Joy and Sin is the touchstone of Righteousness Life in Prasad s writings is manifested not as tethered to any particular set of beliefs but in its vast variegated and multi faceted form

This broad vision often prompted Prasad to choose for his plays a vast canvas The story is there but it does not move and progress through the various stages—Beginning (arambbha), Effort (prayatna), Expectation (praptyasha) Determination (niyatapti) and Achievement (phalagam) as laid down by the ancient law givers of India Nor does it fit in the Western pattern of Exposition Evolution, Climax, Denouement and Resolution/Catastrophe Some of Prasad s dramas like *Ajatashatru Skandagupta Vikramaditya* and *Chandragupta* are almost epical in their sweep and structure and present—movie fashion—a vast panorama of life

Apart from the main plot we come across in Prasad s dramas several sub-plots These should not be confused with the 'Pataka and 'Pakari of Sanskrit plays They go much beyond and come very near to the sub plots in Shakespeare s plays At places they go even further Sometimes a subsidiary episode runs parallel to the main story and intensifies its effect The Bhim Verma episode in *Skanda gupta* is an example Often such episodes work the same intesifica tion by running counter to the main plot The Viruddhak episode in *Ajatashatru* is such Episodes are also incorporated so as to project or strengthen the age image The Vatsaraj episode in *Ajatashatru* comes under this category Now and then Prasad includes some rather brief episodes (or should we call them anecdotes?) the pur pose being the same, i e , increasing the effect of the main plot The fable of the Dumb the Hunchback and the Eunuch in *Dhruva swamini* performs this very role An episode may as well serve as a complement to the main story the Bajira and Mallika episodes in *Ajatashatru* are the examples There are occasions when an episode is brought in with the specific purpose of authenticating the cultural background of a particular era The Matrigupta episode in *Skandagupta* serves precisely this purpose

Action in Prasad s plays follows its own peculiar pattern The ancient Indian Acharyas have insisted that the hero in the long run must achieve his objective Western dramaturgy allows both happy and tragic ending Shakespeare s free genius threw to winds the time honoured categorisation of drama into comedy and tragedy and quite frequently resorted to what for want of any other name is termed Tragi Comedy Most of Prasad s plays also rouse the twin feelings of Joy and Sorrow In several of his essays he has supported the 'Ras', propounded in Indian Aesthetics But his dramas often end by rousing not one single emotion but a combine of several emotions Such short stories as 'Akashadip (The Light House) and 'Puraskar' (The Reward) are literary specimens capable of creating more than one feeling in the mind of the reader

Prasad seems to have transfused his romanticism into many a character of his plays They share many traits with their creator For the most part they are emotional, sentimental, imaginative and affectionate They are endowed with an aesthetic taste They love the past and have a strange penetrative vision Their hearts are full of the milk of human kindness They have no patience for dead wood—old moth eaten ideals, dogmas, beliefs Above all, they are lovers of Beauty Beauty is their religion This they seek as much in inanimate as in animate objects Wherever they see it they love, even worship it and readily submit to its fascination they are seen thrilled at facial beauty, and then natural grace enthralls their hearts They are as well overwhelmed by Beauty transcending senses By imparting to it the rich hues of their emotion charged fancy they render Beauty still more beautiful Sometimes we find them lost in reverie Dreaming is their favourite pastime, their second nature Dreams ignite action and Prasad's characters spare no effort in seeing their dreams come true Patriotic they are in their fibre but even more than that they are inspired by the high idea of cosmopolitanism

Moreover, Prasad s characters possess some individual traits Unlike Prem Chand's characters they do not belong to the common run They have an individuality of their own which is usually extraordinary uncommon At places Prasad seems to have projected in them certain aspects of his own personality Almost all are highly emotional and sentimental they are easily excited to action easily swayed by their passions and emotions At such occasions, their very words take fire Some share even the poetic talent of the

creator We find them talking in a metrical language and using a highly musical diction Even their prose takes wings and rises to poetic heights It also sounds philosophical depths for several of them are seers and thinkers ever engaged in a speculative analysis of life and the world Others are altruists dedicated to the welfare of their people To these children of his fancy Prasad often gives names which point to the basic traits of their corresponding personalities—Prakhyat Kirti (The Glorious), Prapanch Buddhi (The Intriguer) Vijaya (The Intoxicant) Dev Sena (God s Force) and so on

True to his own temperamental proclivities Prasad made a majority of his characters introverts They rarely discuss the external phenomena They often take you to their IN and let you see it, glimpse wise When they open mouth their inner feelings flow out in words Their imagination conjures up strange images Very often their words betray their meditative turn of mind As has already been pointed out Prasad invested several of his characters with poetic sensibility The visionary in him is also reflected in many Viruddhak in *Ajatashatru* voices his intense love for Mallika by comparing her to an Heaven born Apsara come down to spread bliss in his life Matrigupta in moments of ecstasy talks of golden lotuses laughing in a pond of nectar the buzzing black bee (bhramar) playing on a flute and the riot of pollen and flower dust (saurabha and *parag*) An so on This interplay of tender feelings and sensuous imagery has lent a peculiar charm to nearly all the plays of Jayashankar Prasad

Prasad s free spirit also led him to raise a voice of protest against old lifeless traditions and ideals He took special interest in the creation of characters representing clash of opposing ideals Skandagupta and Bhatark Prakhyat Kirti and Prapanch Buddhi Anant Devi Chandragupta and Puragupta Dhruvasvamini and Koma are some conspicuous examples Prasad s Dhruvasvamini stands against the old and time honoured ideals of matrimony and domestic life She declares and secures her freedom from such cramping relations On the other hand there is Koma She has not yet entered into wedlock She knows that Shakaraj has been neglecting her and trying to make someone else his queen Yet when he is killed she is ready to perform Sati ! Prasad s message is clear Blind dogmatic adherence to old ideals is a road to Death whereas a healthy critical attitude towards them can open a new chapter in

one s life

Ruskin has said about Shakespeare that he has no heroes he has only heroines Shakespeare's women, specially in his comedies are immeasurably more impressive more brilliant and more resourceful than the male cast This equally applies to Jayashankar Prasad He seems to have lavished the greater part of his sympathy and his native talent on his female figures Nature has made woman beautiful Passing through the imagination of a romantic artist and touched by the ecstasy of his feelings this God given gift of Beauty to women tends to take a transcendental, almost celestial colouring Tagore has also said O woman you are not merely the handi work of God but also of man, these are over endowing you with beauty from their hearts You are one half woman and one half dream Several female characters of Prasad also combine in their person humanism with imagination And what is humanism but imaginative sympathy They are not just dolled up figures they are dynamic personalities They have been assigned distinctly important and active roles to play in the affairs of the world around them Look at some of Prasad s dicta vis a vis woman and her role

(1) Man is curiosity, a question Woman is answer, of all ridd les a solution
(2) Man stands for all that is harsh all that is tender is embo died in woman He is callousness she love—love the acme of man s inner evolution, the very hub of this Universe No wonder Nature has made her so beautiful so fascinating
(3) Woman s task is to tame the fierce brute in man with the tender love of her heart After the day s hard labour he needs a lesson in affection, toleration and righteousness None can train him better than SHE

Several female characters of Prasad can be seen playing this role admirably well In this context Mallika of *Ajatashatru* is the most impressive and effective of his women characters With her shining example she irresistibly reminds one of Florence Nightingale, the Lady with the Lamp

Many of Prasad s characters male and female rise to sublime almost transcendental heights Yet while creating them Prasad never lost sight of the truth contained in Premchand s memorable

words "To aspire for divinity is not difficult, what is difficult is to infuse life into it' Life likeness is possible only when a character howsoever sublimely conceived never loses touch with the earth, and shares with others some human weakness, some hamartia, if you like Long back Gosvami Tusidas had said—and Prasad never forgot the words—' In this God created world nothing animate or inaminate—is sans virtue or sans vice' Characters thus humanised not only look life like, but they also leave their distinct impact on the readers or spectators—indeed on the men and women in society

The most engaging among Prasad s characters are those whose inner self tends to become an arena of conflicting emotions and passions ideas and ideals To express such conflict, Prasad uses the device of loud thinking Sometimes he resorts to another device viz the creation of a 'Pithamard or 'Pithamardika or what in the West is called a 'Confidant The role of Chakrapalit vis a vis Skandagupta and that of Mandakini vis a vis Dhruvasvamini and Chandragupta fully illustrate this point

In several of his plays Prasad has included events that hurl man s inner self arouse powerful emotions in him and give a spur to his imagination They set him thinking and meditating and erect before his mind s eye a bewitching world of dreams and day dreams They also call forth characters who are sensitive, sentimental imaginative reflective, visionary When they speak their words reflect their inner world The emotional upsurge flows out imagination is verbalised thinking is externalised and dreams or reveries are materialised Thus the dialogues in Prasad s plays are in conformity with his romantic make up a direct and faithful reflection of the 'IN of his characters

William Wordsworth the chief pioneer of Romanticism in English defined poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquility' Prasad s characters too are mostly romantic like himself Their words reflect his powerful emotions and then his cool thinking At times they express their feelings in the form of 'swagat kathan or aside This device is adopted when something arises in a character s mind and which he feels like keeping to himself or himself Shakespeare made quite a frequent use of it By Prasad s times, it came to be considered rather unnatural So he gradually dropped it

Most of Prasad s characters are introverts They are by nature

and temperament, meditative In Shakespeare this kind of thinking finds expression in 'soliloquise', which may be defined as a kind of loud thinking In Prasad when a character is lost in himself, he is left all alone on the stage to soliloquise His loud thinking is a free outflowing of his emotions At times it also reflects his inner con flict It may as well express his fine fancies his colourful dreams reveries That way words become the medium of the expression of someone s inner self

According to Acharya Ramachandra Shukla, there is an endless a variety in the world of man s inner feelings as in the external world Beauty thrills a man cruelty enrages him A terrible sight strikes fear in his heart He is filled with pity when he sees some one being tortured He loathes an unsavoury scene So on and so forth Prasad s characters also express quite effectively their diffe rent feelings and reactions in different situations The dialogues successfully record this variety in tone

Not a few characters of Prasad are lovers and worshippers of Beauty Beauty ignites Love—which when aroused seeks expression And the words take wings Prose begins sounding as poetry Love may seek expressions in metrical language Then a song is born We see Prasad s characters indulging in these various expression techniques

Dialogues in drama play a much more vital role than elsewhere They relate to different characters and are meant to be spoken on the stage by different actors and actresses Somehow Prasad did not pay much heed to this variety factor of dramatic dialogue Almost all his characters when emotionally surcharged—and this they are easily prone to—use alike a highly poetical diction At such moments it is Prasad the poet that speaks through them Not that they lose their distinctive personality Their individuality lies in their respective currents of thought and feeling Each is dis tinguishable from others Not for a moment do we feel as if the same characters were speaking over and over again

In drama it is action that usually determines the shape and size as well as the tone and rhythm of dialogues On this score too Prasad s plays are not found wanting Apart from verbal variety there is ample scope for varied bodily gestures Sometimes dialogues burst forth in sudden short sentences Another time the inner feelings of a character flow like a mountain brook Now and then we get glimpses of the inner self of a character lost in

background That is why these dramas defy their categorisation into the traditional genres like comedy and tragedy They are both a saga of tears and laughter embracing simultaneously the twin currents of joy and pain which we see here flowing freely and even converging upon each other Life expresses itself in events which spell bliss and anguish at the same time Prasad s aim in his dramas therefore is not Rasnishpatti (creating delight) but to highlight the extraordinariness and strangeness of life s spectacle

From the view point of technique *Dhruvasvamini* stands as apart among Prasad s works as *The Tempest* does among Shakespeare s Shakespeare probably wrote *The Tempest* to prove to his critics that he was fully competent to write a compact play observing faithfully the time honoured triple unities In this play the wizard of dramatic poetry also adopted the Greek device of retrospective narration In this technique the play often starts when the story has already reached somewhere near the climax The foregoing events are related sporadically through the speeches of various characters Here the unities of Time Place and Action can easily be exploited Prasad also observed the unities in *Dhruvasvamini* His model however was not Shakespeare but Ibsen the writer of realistic-cum problem-cum-symbolic plays In his essay entitled The Stage Prasad praised Ibsen for his subtle serious and impressive creative technique. *Dhruvasvamini* is also exceptionally successful on the stage But here again it is Prasad the romantic that dominates The thematic plank of this play is as uncommon as of other plays of Prasad Like them it uplifts and transports us to a strange region

Prasad as pointed out in the beginning was temperamentally a romantic He started his dramatic career with the writting of One Act Plays where we already have glimpses of his innate romanticism which later on found its full flowering in his full length plays There is a romantic treatment of Time and Place If the classical unities are observed in *Dhruvasvamini* and the device of retrospective narration is adopted, it is all a matter of technique Otherwise the drama is emphatically romantic in spirit and artistic excellence

It is erroneous to judge Prasad s plays by applying classical formulae They demand and merit different—romantic—standards Prasad has its own theory of drama It has its own norms and parameters which should not be lost sight of while analysing and assessing his achievements in the field of drama

history of Indian Culture when enriched by the Brahmanic and Buddhist Philosophies of life Indian Culture shone in its fullest splendour Whereas on the one hand Chanakya proclaims that the 'Brahaman is a symbol of eternal wisdom who organises the other classes of society for his defence, maintenance and service on the other hand we hear the soothing voice of Lord Buddha

' Dedicate yourself to the service of humanity Multitudes of miserable creatures are waiting for your help Jump into this ocean of universe If you are able to convert into smiles the tears of even one creature thousands of heavens will blossom in your bosom '

These two streams of thought form the web and woof of Prasad s dramatic themes

Being imaginative by temperament he used to traverse frequently into the golden realms of ancient India He was enamoured of the glorious past of Indian History The strains of revivalism are, therefore quite vocal in his dramas The allegorical play *Kamana* is an unmistakable evidence of this fact He wants his country to awake into that heaven of cultural affluence He felt that not only the present but our past history also had been vitiated by foreign influence and therefore he engaged himself in reinterpreting Indian history on the basis of authentic ancient texts His archaeological researches are based primarily on ancient inscriptions, Panini s Grammar Patanjali s treatise on Yoga Kautilya's *Arthashastra Katha Sarita Sagar Rajatarangini*, *Puranas* and literary classics of Sanskrit His interest and insight into the past was deep rooted and he made revealing discoveries regarding Chandragupta Maurya, Skandagupta Kalidas Dhruvasvamini He thus re organised the scattered fragments of ancient Indian culture and converted them into a live phenomenon

He has recreated the milieu of his drama so effectively that we hop over the Indo European culture of the present times, the Indo Muslim culture of the preceding era as also the feudal culture of the earlier period and the Indian life in the reign of Chandragupta and Skandagupta appears vividly before us

This transformation takes place so naturally that the vast interval of more than fifteen hundred years disappears without causing any strain on our imagination Not only the socio political and cultural settings of the scenes but also the very names of places and characters their designations and dialogues all contribute to this cultural revival The moment we hear names like Ambhik

Dramatic Art

PROF NAGENDRA

The calm unfathomable ocean which smiles in the morning rays of the Sun with all the tumult of the surging waves within its depths or the infinite sky which shines in the moonlight having contained the fury of storm and thunder in its bosom—such was the personality of Prasad

Prasad was essentially a poet, who looked upon Joy as the ultimate reality of life and, therefore, Shiv was the object of his worship This devotion to Shiv is the key note of Prasad s spiritual make up as also of his creative genius The peculiarity of Shiv s character lies in effect that he drank all the poison of the creation and yet the blissful quality of his personality remained unaffected his throat might have become blue but the face beamed with joy That was exactly the ideal of Prasad s life Prasad had drunk deep at the fountain of life and passed through a series of calamities which had left a deep scar on his psyche

The quest for bliss amidst the hazards of life around was the goal, and this is the basic spirit of his creative art

Such an artist will not obviously attach great significance to the physical realities of life and will seek for fulfilment some where else His attitude will be romantic in essence Recoiling from the experiences of present life he will traverse into the golden realms of the past or will build up an ideal world of imagination. In Prasad s case it is not an escape his faith in the Eternal Bliss of life was much too deep and his spiritual make up was much too robust for that His explorations in the historical past of India were inspired by a desire to reconstruct and recreate the pattern of life This robust romantic attitude is at the root of the cultural consciousness which pervades all his dramas

Cultural Basis of Dramas

Prasad s dramas have a definite cultural basis He had a strong fascination for Aryan culture and quite naturally therefore he had drawn the themes of his plays from the golden chapters of ancient history of India which extends from the reign of Chandragupta Maurya to that of Harsh Vardhan This was an age of glory in the

history of Indian Culture when enriched by the Brahmanic and Buddhist Philosophies of life Indian Culture shone in its fullest splendour Whereas on the one hand Chanakya proclaims that the 'Brahaman is a symbol of eternal wisdom who organises the other classes of society for his defence, maintenance and service, on the other hand we hear the soothing voice of Lord Buddha

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Sınharan, Antarved, Gopadrı or desıgnatıons lıke Mahamatya (chief minister) and Mahabaladhıkrıt (Commander ın chief) etc, we are transported ınto the cultural atmosphere of ancıent India

This, however, does not mean that Prasad was not alive to the socio political conditions of his own times He had probed deep into the problems of modern life as well His dramas like *Chandragupta* and *Skandagupta* present glorious ideals of nationalism and patriotism In one of the scenes of *Chandragupta*—when Alexander falls unconscious on the battlefield Prasad s patriotic sentiments attain sublime heights in the dialogue between Sinharan and one of his soldiers

Soldier Commander this is the time for wreaking vengeance This tyrant is responsible for the massacre of innocent lives Revenge!

Singharan Wait brave soldier, pause for a moment this also is a revenge India had to pay back a debt This is our reply to his gesture towards Parvateshvar

One may or may not find sufficient historical evidence for this episode *but the patriotic sentiment behind the dialogue is really* superb—the like of which we do not come across in any other work

In the same vein he has dealt with the problems of communalism and parochialism the establishment of a sovereign state is the central argument of Chanakya s political philosophy

' You can achieve the goal only when you forget about Malava and Magadh and think in terms of Aryavarta

× × ×

The invaders will not make a distinction between the Brahmanas and the Bauddhas

There are besides some other prevalent questions of the present times like re marriage and apartheid which have been discussed on a higher plane in his dramas The success of Prasad s art lies in the fact that these problems have been dexterously woven in the texture of historical themes Those who question the validity of such adaptation really *fail to appreciate the* permanent nature of human sentiments

The Tragic Element

For a proper appreciation of Prasad's dramatic art it is necessary to have a clear understanding of his concept of pleasure and pain All his dramas have a happy ending But their cumulative effect is not of unmixed joy or fulfilment There is a shadow of sorrow over the whole drama with a subtle undercurrent of the tragic sentiments flowing all through As one of the Hindi critics has rightly observed, Prasad s concept of a happy ending is not synonymous with unmixed joy it is a feeling of quietitude or a kind of detached Joy There is a strain of pathos lurking in his inner consciousness in spite of all his intellectual commitment to the Shaivite philosophy of Joy His studies in the Buddhist scriptures had put an edge on it The conflict between the Buddhist philosophy of Pain and Shaivaite philosophy of Joy which appears in his dramas in different forms, is really the reflection of his own psychic conflict That is why his dramas have neither a happy nor a tragic ending in the ordinary sense of the term They move deliberately towards a happy end and do reach the target but, then sorrow also makes its appearance suddenly

Seleucus (looks at Cornelia who bows her head in modesty)
Then come to me child Come here Chandragupta
[Both of them stand by Seleucus who joins their hands in wedlock People around cheer them with flowers]
Chanakya (Holding Maurya by hand) Come, let us go now

In this way the drama ends with a mixed feeling of joy and sorrow The joy of Chandragupta s glorious victories and marriage with Cornelia is mixed up with the feeling of sorrow at the departure of his father and particularly of Chanakya who was the king maker in the real sense of the term

It is, thus, evident that these dramas have neither a happy nor a tragic end they end in a mood of poise and tranquillity

This fact is borne out by the delineation of Ras or the portrayals of sentiments in the dramas The two principal sentiments in Prasad s dramas are the Erotic and the Heroic Prasad was a poet of love and beauty par excellence He has treated Eros at different psychic levels—ranging from the refined expression of tragic love of character like Devasena and Malavika to the candid confessions of psycho physical love of charming damsels like Vijaya, from the

noblest example of conjugal love of ladies like Shaktimati to the amorous ways of courtesans like Shyama Among all his contemporaries of Chhayavad School Prasad excelled in portrayal of sensuous love and a number of his songs scattered over various dramas are full of voluptuous imagery Similarly, the heroic sentiment also had found full play in most of his major works The heroic sentiment here is not just a display of martial volour it is always inspired by powerful patriotic feelings

These are of course the two principal sentiments in Prasad s dramas Yet they are not the controlling passions of his themes there is always an undercurrent of higher philosophy which regulates these sentiments and imparts serenity to their cumulative effect

Dramas of Character

Prasad s dramas are dramas of character He has built a splendid gallery of character portraits which are unique creations of art Each one of them from the dominant figures to the casual characters—has a clear cut identity For example Bimbasar of *Ajatashatru* is an introvert character he can only indulge in philosophical reveries without the will to act Similarly the eccentric Dandyayan of *Chandragupta* is a very minor character who appears only in one of the scenes but his sharp dialogue with Alexander leaves an indelible impression on the mind of the spectator or the reader These characters also have their own individuality which cannot be mistaken

Prasad s intensive studies in Shaivite philosophy had endowed him with a robust world view which helped him to breath life and vigour into historical skeletons His male characters can be divided under three broad heads (i) Ambitious Princes struggling for power (ii) Philosophers engaged in resolving the mysteries of life and (iii) Shrewed Diplomat who guided the political activities of these Princes Similarly his female characters can also be classified roughly under four categories (i) ladies of royal families involved deeply in political activities (ii) high spirited princesses struggling through life under the impact of love (iii) women of the middle class caught in the whirl pool of contemporary politics and (iv) sensitive young maidens who impart a kind of sweet tragic flavour to the dramatic theme by their selfless sacrifice

The man of wisdom who unveil the mysteries of life in the light

of the Shaivite and Buddhist philosophy are the prototypes of philosopher Prasad The heroic characters braving the hazards of life with a detached attitude towards the result of those actions have inherited the power of Prasad s personality In his female characters we find Prasad's highly cultivated sense of beauty and the strains of painful experiences suffered in his youth Thus Prasad had breathed his life spirit into all his characters Quite naturally therefore his art of characterisation lacks the quality of dramatic detachment While in the case of a dramatist like Shakespeare it is difficult to discover the echoes of his personality in any character, one can easily find some traces of Prasad s psycho physical make-up in most of his major characters

Prasad s art was a rare combination of the sublime and the beautiful The artist who has created the grand epic *Kamayani* has also composed a number of exquisite lyrics Similarly in drama too, if we have epic characters like Chanakaya and Skandagupta on the one hand there is a series of delicate lyrical characters such as Devasena and Malavika on the other

The epic personalities, which are characterised by extraordinary vigour and rare moral strength, stretch over the entire canvas of the dramas They are full size portraits of life The lyrical characters have been painted very sensitively There are no colours here—only soft silken lines make up the portraits This unique combination of epic grandeur and lyrical sensibility assign a place of honour to Jayashankar Prasad among the great creators in world literature

Poetic Flavour

One of the distinctive features of Prasad s dramas is their poetic flavour which permeates all their themes Prasad was essentially a poet and quite naturally, therefore a deep undercurrent of poetry flows through his stories In the selection of central themes conception of supporting episodes in the psychic make up of characters, setting up of cultural environments and finally in the cumulative effect there is an unmistakable element of poetry The lyrics which he has woven through the fables of the dramas may not all fulfil the requirements of the conventional stage songs but they breathe a kind of sweet fragrance in the entire atmosphere His themes themselves with their colourful cultural background are poetic in essence Prasad has recreated the historical themes of his

dramas by his romantic imagination and emotive sensibility A powerful historical drama like *Skandagupta* ends not with the establishment of a sovereign Indian empire but in the highly sensitive lyrical scene of Devasena s parting from Skandagupta Similarly, the other classical drama *Chandragupta* does not conclude with the final victory of the hero, but with Chanakya s renunciation of the world The plots of almost all his dramas are interspersed with lyrical episodes All the significant characters of these dramas have inherited the poetic sensibility of their creator Not only the heroes of war like Chandragupta and Skandagupta but even the hard headed politicians like Chanakya contain a throbbing heart under their rocky bosoms A few characters have been created primarily to infuse poetic flavour into the eventful themes of historical plays Malavika of *Chandragupta* is such a character who leaves behind a poignant effect on the mind of the spectator after her silent sacrifice

The same thing could be said about the cumulative effect as well It is neither a logical conclusion of the chain of events as they occur nor the fulfilment of any ethical or social ideal but an aesthetic culmination of a romantic theme

Finally his dramatic works are a treasure-house of extremely rich prose lyrics The conversation between Suvasini and Cornelia or between Skandagupta and Devasena can be quoted as an exemplary specimen

Flaws

Prasad s dramas have been a target of bitter criticism from different quarters—quite often from two opposite camps The primary charge of the critics is that they are not stageable The dramatist, they allege had no experience of stage craft actually he had no stage before him except the Parsee stage which he abhorred As such the dramas contain scenes of battles and invasions which cannot be accommodated on the stage

The plots of these dramas especially of the larger dramas are disjointed Prasad had a keen interest in historical research which was the main pursuit of his academic life The result was that he could not resist the temptation of incorporating most of the events which he unearthed from the colourful ruins of antiquity An unmanageable number of scenes are hustled even in his classics like *Skandagupta* and *Chandragupta* The stories of Matrigupta and

Prithvisen for example, have no architectural relevance The development of plot in *Chandragupta* comes to a conclusive end with the coronation of the hero—yet the drama continues Prasad I must admit was not a good architect of plot, with the result that his greatest dramas novels and even his magnum opus *Kamayani* suffer from lack of structural unity

Prasad s language also came under fire It was alleged that the language of his dramas was much too high flown and ornate to serve as an effective medium of the dramatic dialogue Prasad did not condescend to answer these allegations But he was clear in his mind that he was not to write for the Parsee stage which was much too crude for higher art His dramas would not stoop down to the level of the vulgar stage of his time But the stage had to rise to the level of his highly sophisticated art His stand has been justified to a large extent by the later developments in stage craft and in spite of their architectural flaws his dramas remain a high water mark in Indian dramatics

Prasad stands between two summits of world drama—Kalidas in India and Shakespeare in the West He had inherited the rich lyrical sensibility of Kalidas on the one hand and cultivated on the other hand, Shakespeare s capacity for creating living characters His predecessor in the field was D L Roy who had imbibed more of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques than Kalidas s legacy Prasad gave a new turn to Drama by effecting a synthesis of the emotive content of Indian drama and the psychic conflict of the Western play

Theatrical Challenges in Jayashankar Prasad's Plays

DR RITA RANI PALIWAL

Jayashankar Prasad is a phenomenon in the field of Hindi Drama, whose contribution can be debated disputed, but cannot be denied In spite of all sorts of controversies he remains a landmark in Hindi drama The studies of drama made by various critics and literary historians present a peculiar picture Almost all of them have accepted the historical importance of Prasad's plays But on the other side the fact remains that right from the time of the publication of these plays their performance and success on the stage has been questioned and often doubted We have constantly been living in a state of dilemma We have always accepted appreciated and admired them as literary works but have always questioned their stageability and this state of dilemma has become the destiny of our critical appraisal We have positively accepted two categories of plays—one for reading and the other for performing on the stage i e , literary plays and theatrical plays From the point of view of literary art we have been admiring them, prescribing them in the syllabi of the universities and also asking the students the questions about their stageability and literary qualities On the other hand from the point of view of performance we have declared them as unsuitable for stage This notion of two categories of drama has been established so strongly that for a long time we neither questioned nor doubted its validity

The limitations of our critical approach virtually lies in the fact that while analysing and examining these plays we have ignored the inter dependence of stage and drama We have forgotten intentionally or unintentionally that the drama is for theatre and the theatre is for drama *It is basically* written for performance *and it* is performance that makes it complete Each performance of a play although always differing from the other gives a new dimension to the play Therefore this sort of categorization is not only superficial but also illusory In this way we have initially made an error of judgement The reason behind this error is that we are applying the same measures or standards to a play as to a work of poetry The absence of theartical activity for a long time in Hindi

has worsened the position Consequently we are constantly struggling in a divided state of mind which tries to regard these plays as excellent great but not appropriate for the stage

Post Prasad playwriting held the flag of realistic drama, led by Lakshminarayan Misra, challenging and reprimanding Prasad loudly, shouting slogans of intellectualism Afterwards it became the responsibility of every new playwright to challenge Prasad and campaign for better playwriting But the voice that used to start *with revolutionary mission gradually ended in mere slogan monger* ing We have had to pay for the error that we have committed from the very beginning and the loss has not been negligible Since we had accepted that these plays were not written for the stage we never made a serious or integrated attempt to examine their stage ability by repeated performances Nor have we tried to stage them with involvement they deserved Putting the question mark on the theatrical feasibility of these plays led the author himself answer and advocate his attitude In his collection of literary articles *Kavya aur Kala tatha anya Nibandha* there are four essays Rang manch' Natakon ka Arambha', 'Ras Natakon main Ras which deal not only with Indian theartical approach and its comparison with Western theatrical approach but also logical solutions of the confusion that were prevalent in Hindi world about theatre In these essays we find Jayashankar Prasad s view on theatre Here he has discussed the lack of theatrical tradition, stage activity and dramatic critical reflections on arts and its evil consequences But unfortunately neither our drama critics nor the theatre activists have paid attention toward these points

Actually we have not taken as much pains with Prasad s dramatic art as we should have done with the works of a great genius representing the tradition as well as his own age The anti theatrical label fixed on his plays misled both—the literary scholars and *the theatre experts The result was that the amateure theatre* with its limited resources could not easily dare try them on the stage Thus the author could not get the advantage of linking his writing with the stage The performance of his plays by Bharatendu Natak Mandali and Ratnakar Rasika Mandal were more of ceremonies than stage activities The lack of theatrical aptitude as also the knowledge of theatrical tradition failed to create the situation in which dramatic and theatrical performance interact and reciprocate with each other The performance and reperformances

of a play provide the writer with an opportunity to be objective and critical about his own work, mould and remould it according to the theatrical requirements Jayashankar Prasad was deprived of the advantage that was enjoyed by Shakespeare as a playwright Being an actor, Shakespeare himself was a part of stage So the practical aspect of theatre played an important creative role in his concept of playwriting He had the benefit of being directly linked with the sixteenth century audience He could himself feel the moods and pulse of the audience in which a young farmer might have offered his horse to the cry of king Richard III for a horse 'A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse or the bored spectator might have thrown eggs and carrots on the undesired performers

The experiences of the day to day performances provided Shakespeare the opportunities of modifying transforming and adopting his plays But Hindi drama could not offer such opportunity to Prasad In the absence of theatrical activity this playwright endowed with dramatic talent could do nothing but only struggle with the limitations of prevailing circumstances The only theatre which he had before him was the Parsee theatre from which he wanted to keep himself away But at the same time he was unhappy about its growing impact

In search of his theatrical approach Prasad turned towards ancient Indian drama (Sanskrit Drama) At the same time he was fully aware of Indian folk theatre, its living tradition and its potentiality [1] He was well acquainted with the Western theatre especially with the Shakespearean theatre Modern realistic theatre was also in his vision and he could very well feel the possibilities and limitations of realism" In his essay 'Rangamanch he has analysed the process of playwriting and theatrical activity by examining the tradition and contemporary situation and drawn conclusions based on solid arguments He is of the opinion that *Hindi* drama should not totally rely on Western view points rather it should find its path on our own tradition and circumstances This is why he is not in favour of the blindly following the Western realistic drama of Shaw and Ibsen He says— Let not Western influences become our guide [3] He knows that West has not just imposed the realism upon itself but has achieved it as an innate development of its own circumstances [4] He believes that instead of changing like fashion in imitation of the West we should try to get inspiration from it [5] For imitation we can look back to our

own ancient classics because our primordial sources of knowledge are not imbecile [6]

Thus on the one hand he wants to keep Hindi drama away from the cheap techniques of popularity adopted by the Parsee Theatre and on the other hand he wishes that instead of imitating the West indiscriminately Hindi drama should find its roots in our own situa tions linked with ancient Indian theatrical tradition and folk theatre At the same time it should not be kept aloof from the rest of the world So he thinks that the desirable qualities of the Western Drama may be accepted and modified in accordance with our needs

The absence of theatrical activity in Hindi worries him[7] and he writes ' It seems that Hindi theatre has died an untimely death The critics complain that there is a lack of play But nobody tries to understand that there is no theatre [8] He also feels the need for a well trained and competent stage team because only the director with a vision and skill and actors with talent and a sense of devo tion can properly visualise the situations and trends of the time He realises that this lack of theatrical activity has been the biggest hurdle in the development of Hindi drama His own plays were rarely tried on the stage and the attempts made were generally inadequate All that a playwright expects from the theatre could never be provided to him by the Hindi theatre of his times It is this theatrical crisis of his times that compelled him to declare It is a mistake to think that the play should be written for the theatre the effort should be that the theatre is designed for the play which is practical also, of course well trained and efficient actors and stage director with an ability to penetrate into the meaning of the text are needed [9] Again and again he makes it clear that his plays are not meant for an unrefined rather vulgar stage like the Parsee Theatre Only an efficient team with imagina tion and cultural perspective could have made his plays commu nicative to the audience

It is from this very statement misquoted quoted without context or quoted with a biased attitude that all sorts of controversies, errors and illusions have arisen Hindi drama critics have usually blamed Prasad for discarding the basic relationship between play writing and stage activity He has been constantly charged of regard ing drama absolutely independent of and unconcerned with the stage

If one tries to examine closely one can see how the critics have delinked these lines of Prasad from the whole context and have quoted them to suit their purpose This condemnation of the dramatist is a good example to prove how critics have misinterpreted the real concept of the author and failed to make serious attempts to bring him on the stage

Our errors do not end here We have committed another error by not applying appropriate criterion of judgement to Prasad's plays We have been constantly judging them from the angle of Western realistic theatre and its Box Stage We could not come out of the concept of three walls of the Box Stage The realistic stage, with a good deal of stage property, each and every thing creating an illusion of real life situation, has become the limitation of our concept We could not think of any other type of stage—so much so that we forgot the fact that this particular type of stage was designed in the West for a specific type of drama It also had its own restrictions and limitations After all it was not the only type of theatrical design But somehow the theatrical activity in Hindi became so much obsessed with the realistic stage that it could not at all think of any other possibilities nor did it feel the necessity to realise as to how far this stage could be suitable for the performance of Jayashankar Prasad s plays which are essentially historical romantic plays What we did was that instead of improvising a proper situation we observed with grievance that the battle scene in *Chandragupta* appeared a game of young boys [10] I wonder what we would think of the opening scene of *Abhijnan Shakuntalam* where King Dushyant enters the stage in his chariot chasing a deer But one dare not doubt or challenge the stage ability of the scene as *Abhijnan Shakutalam* has again and again been performed not only in India but all over the world

Actually Prasad did not write for the realistic stage As we have already said his dramatic approach is romantic which does not bind itself to the conventions but always aims at innovations With a definite purpose he has chosen the themes of his plays from those periods of history in which Indian civilization was at its peak of glory He has gone to the past in search of the contemporary history and not of the historicity of history He does not want to revise the past Rather he believes that the investigations into the past—can be very useful to a race which wants to uplift itself from its present state of deterioration In search of the

continuity of the history and its relevance to the present he goes to the roots of the history and culture

Thus to say that Prasad has a nostalgia for by gone days because he does not want to face the present problems, is an injustice to the great author After all we should distinguish between faith and 'fascination Through the past his plays actually try to understand, face, rather strive against and solve the burning problems of his times Thus they are the media of cultural awakening in modern Hindi literature and renaissance A country or race struggling to free itself from the bondage can search itself by linking with its cultural heritage

These plays were written at the time when national—cultural awakening was the cherished goal of the country On the political and social scene this awakening found its voice in Gandhi and Tilak In literature it got expression through the writings of Rabindranath and the great exponents of Chhayavad in Hindi Among his contemporaries Prasad has richest and finest cultural sensibility Consequently his poetry and drama furnish the most illustrious examples of national cultural awakening in India In the process of his search for the present through the past he is never lost in the past Correlating historical perspective with creative imagination, he builds up fascinating images of events and personalities

But in this process he does not let imagination surpass history or fanciful situation contradict history In the development of the plot wherever he takes the help of imagination it is generally based on some common belief tradition and probability The poetic sensibility associated with the facts of history has given these plays the universal appeal which Longinus regards essential for the achievement of the sublime Aristotle regards poetry superior to history because history gives the account of the particular while the poetry tends to portray the universal Historical characters attain a universal role Prasad s Skandagupta and Chandragupta do not remain merely historical heroes but become the symbols of all those national warriors who were struggling against the bondage of colonial rule In the same way Dhruvasvamini symbolizes the struggle of Indian women for liberty

The first four decades of the present century was the period of the extensity of the romanticism in Indian literature The romantic trends found their most explicit expression in Chhayavad and its

leading poet Jayashankar Prasad Compromise with the *tradition* had never been a part of Prasad s temperament He accepted it neither in the form nor in the content of his writings It is due to this reason that in his plays we get best examples of his romantic approach towards the theatre In spite of taking ancient Indian dramatic tradition as the basis of his dramatic vision he has never accepted its status quo

India of Prasad s age was the India of turmoil in the field of new ideas new values and and new desire of change The ideological movements of that time had in their background a peculiar type of intensity and keenness in the *freedom movement* This intensity and keenness came into being after the First World War, which brought new challenges and awareness in the political, social and economic life of the country The victory of Japan over Russia in *1904 5* had earlier brought a sense of self confidence *in* the Asian continent

Prasad s Romantic drama has an irresistible desire to break ties of conventionalism and parochialism The awareness of rennaissance which spread through the dramatic talent of Bharatendu Harishchandra has found its aesthetic perfection in Javashankar Prasad He goes far into the tradition, in a way churns the ocean of the cultural and philosophical tradition in order to find the nectar out of it This journey into the past has made him achieve very valuable jewels of thought and insight The burning problem which Prasad had before him was of liberating Hindi drama from the cheap and vuglar sentimentalism of 'Parsee Theatre' and he spent whole of his power in struggling with this problem

In his early plays we do find some traces of traditional conventions *Vishakh Sajan Prayashchitta* and *Rajyashri* retain these conditions at the level of forms but not at the level of content The earlier editions followed the style of Nandipath 'Prastavana Bharat Vakya etc But gradually the writer made himself free of these conventions which appeared no longer relevant The evolution of Prasad s dramatic art shows a gradual effort on the part of the writer to come out of the conventions For example in the second edition of *Rajyashri* and *Vishakh* the author removes 'Nandipath 'Prastavana Bharat Vakya etc By the time of writing *Ajatashatru* Prasad liberated himself from all sorts of conventional mannerism Thus the conventions were tested in the

beginning and were given up when found not much worthy of the drama

The romantic approach of Jayashankar Prasad did not accept three unities The absence of the unities of time place and action is generally regarded as a flaw on the writer s part and a hindrance in the successful performance of the play *Chandragupta* and *Skandagupta* cover the incidents of long spell of time, and the events take place at various places spread from Magadh to Gandhar, Malava to Kashmir, Kanyakubja to Prayag and Shravasti to Kashi The action is also spreading various secondary acts tributing and contributing in the development of the main plot

Three unities have been much discussed in Western Dramatic tradition The pleaders of classic tradition have always regarded the unities esssential for the drama at the same time the romantics have never cared for them The three unities are based on ancient Greek tradition where chorus supposed to be the witness of the whole action and used to inform the audience about all those events which did not take place on the stages So it was taken for granted that the dramatic events should have such length of time, place and action as may be possible in the vision and view of the chorus But later on it was never accepted as a rigid binding Instead of the unities of time, place and action the romantics concentrated on the unity of effect Prasad has also followed this trend He has kept the historical atmosphere alive in its total credibility maintained through change of place time and action in the same way as Shakespeare has done in his history plays

In the same way the scenes of war, murder suicide coup d etat etc put on the stage instead of being kept as events informed through narration show the romantic trend in Prasad Traditionally these sorts of activities were regarded as Natya Varjanas' (prohibited on the stage) 'Natya Varjana means that such action should be put off the stage for the purpose of dramatic decorum and their happening should be informed rather than shown This is the reason that sometimes it is said that Prasad s plays have scenes that might create a problem on the stage e g the scenes of war and campaigns But again we can say that such charges are rather casual remarks Because first of all we know that long time back Western romantics had shown the feasibility most of these types of scenes on the stage Secondly we have our folk

theatre in which all such sort of things are shown in a symbolic way Ramalila Rasalila, Kathakali etc never confronted such problems of performance of communicability So what we need more is the imaginative perspective

The language and dialogues have been the most controversial aspect of Prasad's dramatic art He has been charged of using a language which is not suitable for the stage It is often said that all his characters speak almost in the same style make most lengthy philosophical speeches, which are misfit on the stage, his poet intrudes into the plays now and then using ornate language So also do the highly imaginative lyrics thrown over the plays hardly make any contribution on the dramatic effect Faced with all these charges Prasad s dramatic language throws challenge to the stage director

It has however been the misfortune of Hindi stage that these charges have not been examined in the proper perpective—the perspective of Prasad s peculiar dramatic genius

Thus the focal charge is—the unsuitable language All other charges circumbulate around this

The question of language is very important especially in the context of drama Being a performing art the drama is visual, conversational and composite by its make up Therefore its creative process is associated with the dramatic technique The other forms of literature are two dimensional—wherein the writer communicates to the reader—the drama is three dimensional—the author s work is communicated to the spectator by the director through the stage techniques Therefore, its success depends upon the dramatics' work being properly performed on the stage Besides this, there is another peculiar aspect of drama Its communication and appeal are more direct and immediate than that of the other forms of literature One can read a poem or a novel or a short story in a single sitting or at intervals He may re read some part of it just to recall what he has read previously i e he can have a glance back on the pages read, but what has been performed cannot be repeated So the whole situation needs to be prescribed in such a way that it is directly and immediately communicated to the spectator Thus the language has to play difficult and complex role here Artificially ornamental and pompous style does not make any contribution to the language of drama It is the faithful representation of situation and emotions that brings drama close to the

spectator Thus what is needed is that the dramatic language should have the poetic flavour to convey the emotion in its depth and intensity

The language of Prasad s drama needs to be examined in the perspective of his dramatic sensibility The themes of his plays have been taken from the golden period of Indian history and culture Therefore it is necessary that the atmosphere of ancient India should be represented in its proper colours Quite naturally language plays a very significant role in this respect

So what is most important is the time and space the characters of Maurya age or Gupta age must have their identity Here we have great kings like Chandragupta Maurya Skandagupta and Harshavardhan great masters of politics and diplomacy like Chanakya and Krishna, saints and sages like Gautam Buddha and Dandyayan, classical poets like Matrigupta (Kalidas) They are well known characters of history and have their own specific image Their ideas and thoughts need to be expressed in a suitable language Wherever there is a depth of ideas emotions or thoughts, the language cannot be as simple as it is in the day to day conversation Kalidas will have to be poetic in his language, so will Chanakya s language display the shrewdness of the great diplomat In the same way whenever there is a conflict between two schools of thought the language has to be reflective and argumentative The change of pictorial imagery in the language or long dialogues does not seem to be quite justified Either the characters using such language and situations presenting the need of such language should be declared redundant and expunged from the plays or they should be accepted in their actual form (no matter with possible modification) If we accept that these plays represent the time which they depict we shall have to accept the instruments and the media through which they have been represented

The comment that all characters in these plays speak the same language is rather vague Certainly the terminology used here is usually derived from Sanskrit sources But it is not the vocabulary only that makes the language It is the use of vocabulary that makes it simple or complex difficult or easy analytical or discriptive direct or ambiguous Prasad s characters have different levels of language All of them speak the language suitable to their temperament mental make up and emotional state Different

situations do require different levels of language In the dialogues of *Dhruvaswamini* the language becomes quite bitter and satirical The language of Suvasini and Devasena is on the other hand extremely sweet and poetic

It is not therefore correct to say that all of his characters speak the same type of language The vocabulary, syntax, phrases tone irony, imagery and symbols change with persons' moods, situations, emotions and feelings If the use of imagery and symbols and pictorial quality of Prasad s language is condemned fro u the point of view of stage performance the charge needs serious examination Today when Mohan Rakesh s *Asad ka Ek Din* and *Laharon ke Raja Hans* with all their imagery and symbolic language are put successfully on the stage how far is it justified to question Prasad s language? What is needed is a sincere effort on the part of the director as well as the actors Whenever there had been such an effort language has not proved to be a barrier

Some of Prasad s plays were staged during his life time *Chandragupta Skandagupta* and *Dhruvaswamini* were staged by Bharatendu Natak Mandali and Ratnakar Rasik Mandal Among the attempts of these amateur groups, the most noted was the first performance of *Chandragupta* by 'Ratnakar Rasika Mandal The people associated with literary and cultural activities in Varanasi participated in this performance It was planned by Pt Ramananda Misra The stage script of the play was prepared by the author himself who used to be present during the rehearsals The members of local dramatic groups teachers and students of Banaras of Hindu University took part in this play Many celebe rated personalities like Pandit Sita Ram Chaturvedi Sarvadanand Sharma, Balli Babu Laxmikant Jha also acted in it The author made several changes in the original play to suit the requirements of the stage The revised script was later published under the title *Abhinaya Chandragupta* by Prasad s son Ratnashankar Prasad The costumes for this performance were brought from Calcutta Technical experts also came from Calcutta

The reviews of this performance were published in *Aj* and *Jagaran* These reviews pointed out several flaws Some of them were insufficient rehearsal lack of harmony between the character and actor (in some cases) loud prompting etc As far as the script was concerned these reviews indicated that the arrangement of the scenes was not suited to the use of drop curtain What is more

important to note is that there was no adverse comment regarding stageability of the plays in the reviews

Later on also there had been performances of Prasad s plays but most of them had been experimental as there was not much of stage activity in Hindi world till then A serious attempt was made when Lakshmikant Varma's theatrical group Setubandh performed *Chandragupta* in 1960 at Allahabad Shanti Gandhi a teacher of National School of Drama prepared the stage script of *Skandagupta*, which was performed on the occasion of the centenary of Hindi Theatre in 1968 in Calcutta The stage set was planned by Abraham Alkaji, the director of National School of Drama

In 1972 Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademy organised a theatrical training workshop in Varanasi The well known director V V Karanth selected *Chandragupta* for the training of the group Through this play he planned to impart training in the choice of costumes, set designing music sound effects and of course, acting

Later on Ram Gopal Bajaj also picked up *Chandragupta* for performance by National School of Drama Thus *Chandragupta* *Skandagupta* and *Dhruvaswamini* have been staged a number of times by various groups as well as national institutions Some of these performances have been quite successful and effective All these efforts ensure a better understanding of Prasad s plays, and we can hope that there will be a time when immense possibilities of these plays will be brought to light by competent actors and talented directors

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A Literary and Technical Study of Skandagupta and Chandragupta

VIRENDRA NARAYAN

Prasad was a prolific writer Poetry, short stories dramas research and literary essays came with equal felicity His stamp has been acknowledged by the fact that a whole period of Hindi literature has been given the name 'Prasad period

It is a difficult to pin point if his forte was poetry or drama His epic *Kamayani* stands as a mile stone in Hindi literature And yet his plays cannot be ascribed the role of second fiddlers It is true that in the absence of competent producers and directors his plays have suffered The literary merits alone have been evaluated And yet visualization of the plays on the stage while reading them unfolds a master craftsman dazzling in his deftness and sophistry deeply touching in his compassion and immensely capable of unparalleled aesthetic for satisfaction

I do not consider it fair to examine Prasad s plays in the light of Bharat s *Natyashastra* It would be much more fruitful to have a look at the then methods and styles of dramatic presentation and trends in play writing in Hindi as well as other sister languages where theatre was live and vibrant For drama has been very rightly given the nomenclature of Drishya Kavya and the visual aspect is conditioned by the then methods and styles of presentation

In the Hindi belt the presentation was in complete control of Parsee theatrical companies whose main forte was sentimentalisation in dialogues cheap songs and dances and trick scenes to earn quick money They were not bothered about the dignity of historical or mythological characters Actors and actresses were employed with emphasis on singing and dancing rather than their histrionic ability Playwriting had to conform to a set pattern

Generally there used to be painted curtains—the drop curtain street palace jungle and river Street curtain used to be very close to drop curtain Considerable space was provided in front of the palace to enable arrangement of seats chairs etc Forest and river placed in the end acquired depth for crowd and trick scenes

Street curtain was frequently used to present sub plots usually farsical, to give time for the arrangement of elaborate setting in front of the palace curtain or trick scenes

Almost similar conditions of presentation were obtained in Bengali Gujarati or Marathi stage – but with a vital difference All the persons involved in the presentation belonged to the region and had a social conscience and commitment completely absent in Parsee companies This resulted in an amazing difference in the quality so aptly summed in the following excerpt

> 'When (in Bengali Theatre) Miss Prabha appears as Sita with Shri Bhaduri (Sisir Kumar) as Ram even the worst critics cannot imagine that she is a prostitute Her serene face graceful gestures lucid eyes, quiet dignity benign smile slow movement and sweet voice—everything is saturated with the idealistic concept of Sita Even those who know her as a prostitute can see only Sita on the stage Miss Putty of Parsee Theatre also appears in the role of Sita (Hindi theatre) in the Alfred Corinthian stage of Calcutta Every entry on the stage is an exhibition of belly dancing even the devotees of Ram start wriggling And the Rams are equally provocative At the time of exit they cast such lecherous glances and the way they encircle Sita in their arms that shouts of encore and thunderous applause compell them to enact the entry—exit again and again (*Shiva-pujan Sahaya—Collected Works* Vol III, p 178)

The result was obvious By and large, association with stage in Hindi world began to be considered derogatory Good directors, and actors and actresses were scarce There were playwrights but hardly any presentation worth the name Drama was extolled as a medium of expression on paper only The full import of a play was never realised For written drama is like a grounded plane You can admire the graceful lines and the seating comfort Only when the plane flies, one realises the heights to which it can take you Only when a play is presented aesthetic joy is available in the fullest sense

During Prasad s period (1889—1937) Marathi drama had firmly established its line of development The style of presentation was similar to that of Parsi companies But Anna Sahib Kirloskar (1843 1885) had come up with interesting deviations in the form of

musicals (*Shakuntala, Saubhadra* and *Ram Rajya Viyog*) They were harbingers of a new trend (musicals) which is still very popular in Maharastra He had also laid down the tradition of adaptations Three veteran dramatists G B Deval (1855 1916), S K Kolhatkar (1872 1934) and K K Khadilkar (1871 1948) were prominent among those who built a tradition on the foundation laid down by Anna Sahib Kirloskar Out of the seven plays by Deval only one was original with a social theme The rest were adaptations and mostly musicals All the plays had 5 or more acts with several scenes in each act Out of Kolhatkar s eleven plays 9 of them were on social themes and all had five or more acts (except three) with scenes ranging from 14 to 28 Khadilkar s 15 plays include historical and mythological subject and one adaptation But towards his later period his construction of the plot and scenic arrangement underwent modifications and from 5 acts and 25 scenes he came down to 3 acts and 8 scenes His *Manapman Swayamvar* and *Bhaubandki* were most popular *Kichak Vadh* deserves mention as a play where the mythological character Kichak was successfully used as a symbol of oppression Tragedy was introduced by R G Gadkari (1885 1919) with a social theme in *Ekach pyala*

During this period Bengali Theatre had also developed its own distinctive personality It also began with adaptations and translations The landed aristocracy in Calcutta vied with one another in creating or patronising their own theatre with tne result that good plays were always in demand and there was no dearth of good dedicated actors on the stage Apart from the charm of the classics two factors appear to have weighed heavily in the minds of the authors (1) expression of national awakening against foreign rule and (2) eradication of social evils

The tendency was discernible as early as Ram Narayan Tarkaratna (1822 1886) Almost all of his plays (13) are mytholo gical or adaptations But *Kulin Kulasarvasva* is a direct hit on social evil In this connection mention must be made of *Neel Darpan* by Dinabandhu Mitra (1830 1873) which is a direct attack on the British indigo planters Ardhendu Shekhar Mustafi s role as the British indigo planter has been a landmark in the history of Bengali stage For our purposes two more authors deserve mention —Girish Chandra Ghosh alias Dani Babu (1844 1912) and D L Roy (1863 1913) These two authors mainly utilised historical

episodes and personalities to awaken the national conscience against foreign rule emphasising the greatness and glory of Indian tradition of national unity One has to mention plays like *Shahajahan* and *Chandragupta*

So far as the art of playwriting is concerned, it was much less the same, basically Shakespearian with suitable modifications By and large, there was the main story with sub plots to relieve the tension and enable elaborate scenic arrangements The development was almost like a straight line Hero and his followers had all the virtues and hardly any weakness Dialogues used flowery language, poetic imagery and banked heavily on sentimental outbursts

But in both the theatres every author worth the name was asso ciated with dedicated actor Plays were presented on the stage and the next venture by the author bore the stamp of modification in the light of previous presentations

Gujarati drama was progressing much less on the lines of Parsee dramas But in all these live and vibrant theatres every successful stage play is associated with the name of famous actors – Ganpat Rao Bodas, Keshav Rao Date Bhaurao Kolhatkar, Bal Gandharva etc (Marathi) Girish Chandra Ghosh (Dani Babu), Ardhendu Shekhar Mustafi Amrit Lal Basu etc (Bengali) and Sohrabji Ogra, Amrit Keshav Nayak etc (Gujarati)

Hindi had a different atmosphere Of course, there was the illust rious personality of Bharatendu in not so distant a past who had the courage and vision innate undetstanding of the art of play-writing a realisation of the aspects of presentation and above all a creative compulsion to write and if need be enact his plays After Bharatendu there was a big difference The two wheeled chariot had one wheel missing What was worse the presentation of Parsee companies made it well nigh impossible for good actors to come up

Jayashankar Prasad started writing plays under these circum stances previous paragraphs have been written to give a picture of the psychological conditions of the creative personality Like any other form of creative experssion drama has its own rules and norms in which the role of audience is very vital

From Bharatendu and other Hindi playwrights Prasad inherited disgust and repulsion for the treatment of plays at the hands of Parsee companies The emergence of nationalist movement was all pervasive He was deeply interested in ancient Indian History

particularly Gupta period And above all, he was essentially a poet

Let us first examine *Skandagupta*, one of his major plays in the light of these facts Will it not be more profitable to visualise a presentation of *Skandagupta* and thus have an idea of the brilliance or mediocrity of the play? Atleast it will have the simulation of plane in flight, not grounded on the tarmac

Skandagupta is a play of five acts divided into 33 scenes—locations ranging from palace to forest If a presentation has to be visualised I for one would like to have a formalistic stage design with platforms and stairs near the wings and the back drop leaving enough space in the middle for crowd sequences

The play opens with a soliloquy underlining the futility of the lust for power The very opening lines indicate the basic note of the play It promises growth on two planes On the horizontal plane one may expect the progress of the crown prince towards inheritance and consolidation of the Gupta empire On the vertical plane is expected the development of the personality who is least enamoured of power

Skandagupta is warned by Parnadatta, an old faithful soldier and commander He informs him of the gathering dark clouds—impending attack of the Huns, the atmosphere of revelry and merrymaking in the palace and above all his own reluctance Parnadatta s son and friend of Skandagupta strikes yet another note—ominous yet significant—there are no fixed rules of ascedency to the throne of the Gupta empire! By the time Parnadatta is able to admonish his son messenger informs of the conditions in Malava the subjugation of Saurashtra by Huns etc Skandagupta who opened the scene with his soliloquy is caught in the whirlpool of activity and takes an immediate plunge The first scene introduces the hero most significantly—his personal apathy for power and the growing responsibility of the crown prince in the face of foreign aggression and internal sloth

The second scene is the other side of the coin—imperial palace surcharged with an atmosphere of decadence irresponsibility and sensuality It ends with a group song by court dancers—an eloquent testimony to the personality of the poet dramatist The third scene presents Matrigupta (poet Kalidas according to the author) and Kumardas (the prince of Sinhal) who point towards the magnitude of the impending crisis and build their hope on Skandagupta It appears that this scene has been contrived to provide the time gap

for setting of the next scene—Anant Devi s chamber where the conspiracy is hatched in adherence to the norms of the then play-writing

In her chamber Anant Devi the second queen of the King, designs the conspiracy with the help of Bhatarka a disgruntled but valient soldier Here the kingpin of the conspiracy Bhikshu Prapanchabuddhi makes his dramatic appearance invoking the blessings of Goddess Tara

A night scene staged in the patchy light will symbolically high light the crisis threatening the kingdom Although Anant Devi professes her sole concern for her son Puragupta and his ascen dency to the throne, her attitude to Bhatarka has yet another shade

The fifth scene presents the door to the inner apartments Shar vanag is on duty—a faithful simple soldier He is informed as to how the King is virtually a captive in the hands of the second queen and Devaki, the first queen and mother of Skandagupta is not allowed to go to see him But then it is too late The king is dead and Anant Devi has proclaimed her son Puragupta as the King The faithful soldiers and members of the royal service are faced with two alternatives—either to accept the situation or revolt against it But since revolt will only weaken the strength of the Gupta dynasty they prefer to commit suicide

Apart from the similarity they provide the texture and colour of the scenes which a host of stage gimmicry may not be able to do as effectively The impending calamity could not find a better back ground

The sixth scene gives an idea of the atrocities the Huns are about to perpetrate and all eyes are set on Skandagupta the only possible saviour

It is not known why the seventh scene is included in the first Act The conditions in Kusumapur have been unfolded Skanda gupta has gone to Malava to help Avanti fight the Shakas and all hopes of survival of the Gupta empire are centred on him The seventh scene located in Avanti should have been the beginning of the second Act This scene starts on an ominous note introducing Vijaya owner of immense wealth and Devasena a princess—two women destined to play a vital role in the life of Skandagupta Opening lines delineate the personality of the two in sharp colours Vijaya is vivacious charming and above all ambitious But she

cannot face the ravages of war Devasena is quite beautiful and serene who sings her favourite song lest there may not be an opportunity in future When the fort is attacked and finally saved by the arrival of Skandagupta and his soldiers, both Vijaya and Devasena are attracted towards him Vijaya is vocal and Skandagupta is attracted towards her immediately

Love and hate, sometimes resulting in violence have been treated as point—counter point in the development of man woman relationship Classic examples are *Othello* (Shakespeare), *Yarma*, *The Blood Wedding* and other plays (Lorca) Similarly the love triangle is also an age old device This play contains both with a difference Love hate relationship is developed in the case of Vijaya and Skandagupta The love triangle has a shifting pattern It begins with Vijaya Devasena Skandagupta and develops into Vijaya-Bhatark Skandagupta Let us see how this arrangement works out

The second act begins on a quiet note—Devasena probing into Vijaya s mind about the depth and scope of attraction In the process her own personality is unfolded with her concept of heaven, of love and its fulfilment These ladies withdraw on seeing Skandagupta entering with Chakra Skandagupta is reluctant to go to Kusumapur and wrest the throne from Puragupta his step brother He prefers a quiet life But Chakra exhorts him saying that—complacency, lack of interest and reluctance will amount to dereliction of duty in the larger interest of the country When both go out Vijaya is a little disturbed Her ambitious temperament gets a shock the prince is devoid of ambition Devasena flings a few remarks at Vijaya and with her tendency to sing a song makes a very significant statement which is well worth examination

'*On a lone mound all by itself have you seen a blossom laden* Parijat tree in a beautiful autumn morn? He does not sing in unison with other trees

Who is in her mind when she is visualising this lone Parijat tree? Her own little self or Skandagupta? This question has to be faced squarely now If it is her own little self she is one type of person If it is for Skandagupta she is a different person Both the interpretations are possible *But one has to be definite*

By the end of the scene the reaction of all those *who count in* Malava is revealed Skandagupta has saved Malava—Devasena *and*

Vijaya are attracted towards this valiant prince from Kusumapur So is Bandhuvarma the king of Malava He is aware that the future is in the hands of Skandagupta and he pledges his unqualified support to him

Prapanchabuddhi the monk is ready with the plot and with the help of Bhatark has recruited a faithful soldier Sharvanag for the murder of Devaki the senior queen—the mother of Skandagupta The king is dead Promise of wealth and position mixed with veiled threat and above all the excitement to prove his worth make Sharvanag their slave In the next scene he affirms his decision by drinking heavily and after a little comical interlude in which he makes advances towards his own wife thinking her to be some other woman brags about his new decision and bright future that await him His wife Rama is appalled and rushes to Devaki who quietly resigns herself to her fate Anant Devi Bhatark and Sharvanag enter the scene Rama defends Devaki and is even prepared to kill her husband who according to her, is already a 'dead man', because his conscience has been killed Timely arrival of Skandagupta saves Devaki and Rama

The fifth and sixth scenes prepare the ground for the last scene of the second Act Bandhuvarma with his brother Bhimavarma decides to make Skandagupta the king Bhatark traces out his mother at Ujjaini where she is leading the life of an ascetic In her reaction Vijaya decides to marry Bhatark for she cannot compete with Devasena whose brother has offered the kingdom to Skandagupta Govindagupta, uncle of Skandagupta who had left Kusumapur takes all the members of the royal family to join the coronation ceremony The last scene of the second Act is full of dramatic twists and turns Skandagupta is proclaimed king at Ujjaini and not at Kusumapur After the coronation ceremony, the culprits are brought for their trial which is summary and dramatic In consonance with the idealistic approach of the author voiced by [illegible] mother of Skandagupta proclaims that there should be no bloodshed on the auspicious day

At the time of the trial of Bhatark, it is revealed that [illegible] has married Bhatark—which causes a shock both to [illegible] and Devasena This gives a new turn to the love [illegible] infatuation Vijaya has taken a hasty decision [illegible] of the preference of Skandagupta for Vijaya and [illegible] him without any selfish motive She does not [illegible]

that as the princess of Malwa she has a claim on Skandagupta s love

External attack has been successfully warded off and it appears that Skandagupta may have smooth sailing But Bhatark and Vijaya are instigated by Prapanchabuddhi and when they are ready to murder Devasena, she mumbles the name of her beloved Skandagupta Of course Devasena is saved

With Anant Devi the stepmother of Skandagupta joining hands with Bhatark and Vijaya the conspiracy takes a new turn In her passion for revenge Vijaya stoops down to the level of an entertainer for Skandagupta s step brother Puragupta Bhatark resorts to treachery and demolishes the dam with the result that Skandagupta and his soldiers are swept off in the floods

The fourth Act presents another turn in the man woman relationship Vijaya openly accuses the stepmother of Skandagupta for her designs on Bhatark who is hers and hers alone She decides to serve Skandagupta and the country Devaki breathes her last when she hears of the news that Skandagupta has been swept away in the floods of Kubha Bhatark realises his mistake Is it too late? The rest of the Act is devoted to the activities of the characters like Matrigupta the poet from Kashmir, and also of the prince of Sinhala It ends with Parnadatta the faithful Commander of Magadh rescuing Devasena from the hands of a Hun and Skandagupta searching for the lady in distress who had cried for help

The fifth and the last Act establishes the supremacy of Skandagupta—Vijaya commits suicide Bhatark now a reformed man is saddled with further responsibilities and when the crowd is jubilant over the victory of new king Skandagupta and Devasena stand face to face as man and woman Skandagupta proposes but it is too late Devasena has decided to dedicate her life to a different cause The hero is left lonely and forlorn amidst rejoicings

It will be seen that this play is in line with the pattern of the then playwriting with sub plots and a host of minor characters The author is burdened with the task of national awakening and defence of true Hindu religion and culture There are ten songs some with dances in this play of 33 scenes But this is one side of the picture

The basic problem is posed in the very opening lines of the play Lust for power is so intoxicating and yet without any substance Temperamentally Skandagupta is averse to all this and yet circum

stances push him into the whirlpool of power struggle The author provides a justification for this The country has to be saved and only he can do it The charm and strength of the play lies in the portrayal of this duality wherein the roaring success of 'public life is juxtaposed against the pathetic failure of personal life The play ends with hysterical slogans of victory all around Skandagupta whose inner self mumbles with depression, lonely Skandagupta, un fortunate Skanda

Herein lies the strength of the play because it is relevant even today as every human being faces a conflict in life in one form or the other Had Skandagupta failed on both fronts, it would have been a tragedy of a different type may be more intense but cer tainly less charming If he had succeeded in his personal life things would have been easier This brand of tragedy is more aesthetic as Skandagupta has to shoulder the responsibility of lonely forsaken being

Portrayal of duality has yet another facet in this powerful play Vijaya and Devasena are both charming and attractive young ladies One is ambitious and extrovert The other is quiet self com posed but equally warm within Bhatark and Skandagupta are both valiant soldiers but again one is ambitious while the other is an epitome of selfless valour Similarly Devaki and Anant Devi the two wives of the old king are equally anxious about the welfare of their sons Skandagupta and Puragupta But Devaki s anxiety is tempered with a desire for the welfare of the whole kingdom where as Anant Devi is only greedy of power and her lust makes her stoop to conspiracy and even murder

If one were to present the play as it is printed it will take more than four hours on the stage, may be more Ten songs with a few dances will account for more than an hour But in the hands of a competent producer/director a way can be found out Thirty three scenes will pose no major problem if a formalistic set design is chosen with platforms ramps and steps Scenic decorations are un necessary for the lines in the play are powerful enough to create the atmosphere One example will prove my point In the fifth scene of the first Act a sentry on duty describes the night

"Sir I know not why but my heart is trembling as if the night is crawling with fear The wind blows but without a sound I shout the words of command but fail to hear them myself What

is all this?

This is the night when the old King breathes his last This reminds of another night (*Macbeth*) when Duncan was murdered Lennox describes it

> The night has been unruly where we lay
> Our chimneys were blown down and as they say
> Lamentings heard i the air strange screams of death
> And prophesying with accents terrible
> Of dire combustion and confused events
> New hatched to the woeful time the obscure bird
> Clamoured the livelong night Some say the earth
> Was feverous and did shake
>
> (*Macbeth* Act II Scene 3)

The night in *Skandagupta* is stunned for there is no sound only a sense of creeping movement in the air The night in *Macbeth* is 'rough The descriptions suit and dramatic purpose ideally Kumargupta died a natural death consumed by his licentious living On the other hand Duncan was murdered No Director should think of using stage tricks to depict such nights It is the job of the actors

The basic problem in the presentation of *Skandagupta* is of editing the play and I for one will certainly prune quite a few characters and sequences that have an overdose of patriotism Of course one has to keep in mind the development of the plot and avoid a straight line movement

Suitable editing will take care of some of the songs and verses in the play It is interesting to note that all the verses in the printed version are not mentioned as songs It is not known as to what was the intention of the author As a Director I will like to utilise some of the verses as part of the dialogue suitably arranged so that they contribute to acting and effective delivery of the speech Some of them would prove to be gems in the hands of competent actors and actresses Beginning with prose and switching to verse in the same dialogue opens the door to immense possibilities

Let us have a closer look at the dialogue of Vijaya (Act V Scene 2) when she offers her love to Skandagupta She addresses him as her lover and in flowery prose requests him to visualise their

union as that of two pieces of lightening in a blue sky But she finds prose not adequate enough and switches on to verse as if the flower is brought closer to the nostrils when the colour shape and texture have gone out of focus Only the fragrance remains in sharp focus leaving the rest to be filled in by the mind s eye Her invitation for gay abandon could not be more intense or colourful in any other way

Devasena's dialogue (Act V, Scene 6) is a soliloquy It begins with a note of warning to the dreams of her own mind as if an elder sister is talking to a younger sister Then comes the decision—'I bid farewell to all In a sense the dialogue is complete But the poet goes a step further where the essence of her life s struggle is summed in verse Automatically, one is reminded of the song of Ophelia before her death in *Hamlet* It is not meant to be a regular song It is more of a wail, which is difficult to describe but not so difficult to imagine

One aspect of the structural beauty of *Skandagupta* deserves special mention The play begins with a soliloquy of the hero When the Act ends we have his dramatic query about Vijaya—'Who is she? The second Act ends with his coronation at Malava The third Act ends with Skandagupta s lines—'Treacherous Bhatark has demolished the dam Water is rising in Kubha Let us move quickly At the end of Act IV, Skandagupta faints at the news of his mother s death And of course the end of fifth Act and the play is again a sharp focus on Skandagupta s psychic make up With rejoicings all around the hero finds himself lonely and forlorn I have not come across any play where the thread of the play comes so naturally in the hands of the hero at the end of every Act We begin with a thoughtful man and then the circumstances friends and foes come into play After the end of each Act the hero stands in sharp focus Facet after facet of the personality is revealed and the end comes artistically creating a new type of tragedy of a victorious king lost in the thoughts of his loneliness as a man

As mentioned earlier Prasad was also a poet who achieved great heights and who could be better qualified for writing visual poetry? But the demands of poetry and drama are different because of the very nature of the medium of expression Poetry is read or recited, but drama is seen In the process various limitations are imposed on drama On another plane various factors are added—actors and actresses, director and stage maker etc The lines in a drama are

doubly addressed—to the co performers on the stage in particular and to the audience in general Thus the lines of cold print appear before the audience in a live form embellished and moulded by the art of the actions So far as the response is concerned, the audience or reader factor is common to both the forms Hence the poet and the dramatist have, in a sense different loyalties When they work in unison the result is brilliant But when they work at cross lines, the result is obviously disastrous Will it not be more appropriate to discuss this aspect in the case of Prasad after having analysed his one more major play *Chandragupta*, considered by a sizeable section of critics as his best play?

The structural pattern of *Chandragupta* is similar to that of *Skandagupta*—44 scenes in 4 Acts with 18 male and 9 female characters supported by a host of people for crowd effects It has a number of personalities from the pages of history like Nand, Chanakya Chandragupta Rakshas, Alexander etc The locations in turn, range from Gandhar to Kusumapur (Magadh) from street to palace, from forest to river providing lot of scope for spectacle and stagecraft It may be noted that the then concept of successful play demanded scope for music dance spectacle and stage tricks

The play opens with a scene from Takshila where Chanakya is a teacher and Chandragupta a student In the same scene we also have the crown prince of Gandhar—Ambhik and another crown prince from Malava—Sinhala A well designed sequence of events builds the ground prior to the invasion of Alexander Ambhika is helping the Greeks The rest including his sister Alka are trying to prevent him because they realise that it may open the floodgate of devastation for the whole country The second scene takes us to Kusumapur where king Nand is witnessing the dance of a courtesan Suvasini Dramatically, the scene presents the affluence of Magadh and a carefree atmosphere Rakashas who is an accomplished artist has pleased Nand He being a very accomplished musician is appointed a minister The third scene a short but powerful sequence is focused on Chanakya when he comes back to Kusumapur to find the hut of his father in ruins and is told that his father is in jail When he pulls out the pillar which used to support the hut he symbolically wipes out the past and underlines his resolve to build the future It is an age old dramatic device which has been used very effectively The fourth scene starts with the beginning of a misunderstanding between Chanakya and Rakshas Suvasini, the be-

loved of Rakshas has taken a dislike for Chanakya and wants him to be punished The princess of Magadh is rescued from a leopard by Chandragupta Several alternatives are posed. Will Suvasini, Rakshas and Chanakya from a love triangle? Kalyani, the Magadh princess is attracted towards Chandragupta Will this attraction grow into love? In spite of it being contrived this scene serves a useful purpose for it provides a movement to the plot In the next scene we get a glimpse of the decadence of Nand s court with an attempt by Chanakya to sound a warning to Nand which results in his arrest and finally the famous pledge of Chanakya Ranging between Magadh and Gandhar, the Act presents the Greeks admiring Indian culture and it is here that Dandyayan pronounces Chandragupta as the future king of the country Towards the end we meet Cornellia the daughter of Selucus and Chandragupta who admire each other This is reminiscent of a similar sequence in *Skandagupta* when Skandagupta and Vijaya face each other

The first Act vividly paints the picture of the country prior to the invasion of Alexander the alignment of forces and throws a hint to the future developments It also sketches sharply the sober characters particularly that of Chandragupta firmly evincing the qualities of the future king of the country

The second act depicts the fight between Alexander and Porus training of Chandragupta in the strategy of new camp of the Greeks marriage of Ambhika with the sister of Porus at the instance of Alexander imprisonment of Alka and Sinharan etc The need for calling Kalyani from Magadh is understandable but the pretext is flimsy Porus had refused her hand in marriage She comes with the resolve to teach Porus a lesson The most important aspect of this episode is the emergence of Chandragupta as a seasoned warrior who is conscious of the situation and uses effective tactics to defeat Alexander and yet humane enough to allow him to return to his country

The third Act brings us to Magadh There are rumours that Nand has arrested Suvasini the courtesan and ordered the arrest of Rakshas as the co-conspirator This was by Chanakya a ploy to call Rakshas to Magadh Alka and Sinharan get married The attraction between Chandragupta and Cornelia matures Nand in his arrogance falls a victim to the machinations of Chanakya He is killed by Shakat and Chandragupta is proclaimed the king It is only in the third act that one finds Kalyani the princess of

Magadh in love with Chandragupta So also is a maiden—Malavika from Gandhar On the one hand it emphasises the charm of the personality of Chandragupta and on the other, it presents a comic situation One can have a number of admirers as the king and saviour but love infatuation admiration are all so different from one another Has the author deliberately left it vague? Is he employing it as a device of the dramatist? Let us wait and see

Nothing of this nature develops in the fourth Act Chandragupta is established as a great ruler and his marriage with Cornelia puts an end to all these speculations

We feel that it is the story of a king ably advised by Chanakya We hardly get a glimpse of the man in Chandragupta He appears to be a puppet, a brilliant and powerful puppet but nevertheless a puppet in the hands of the master politician Chanakya

While Skandagupta was reluctant to assume responsibility and power Chandragupta appears to be enthusiastic for power from the very beginning His ambition is constantly whetted by the machinations of Chanakya When left to himself he sometimes feels lonely and forlorn but the situation is not allowed to develop One fails to understand why such a handicap has been woven into the fabric of the play so far as Chandragupta is concerned Probably the author has exhausted all his resources on characters like Chanakya Rakshas Shakatar etc

The question is—who is the counterpart or foil to Chandragupta We cannot think of Chanakya There is no other character in the play In the last analysis the weakness of the play lies here We do not have Bhatark of *Skandagupta*

It is pertinent to note that there are no villains in the plays of Prasad Hence his craft has to adopt a special technique A hero and a villain provide the simplest pattern for a play The methodology employed by Prasad is to have opposite or conflicting ideals serving the purpose of 'point counter point Although we have Skandagupta and Bhatark but they do not form the hero villain pattern The conflict is between unbridled ambition and dedicated service Vijaya and Bhatark symbolise one type while Skandagupta and Devasena the other Unfortunately there is no such conflict either of personalities or of ideas in *Chandragupta* Chanakya is too strong a personality Hence, he cannot be a counterfoil to Chandragupta There is no other character So far ideals are concerned we have a strong sense of patriotism on the one hand, but

assert he utilises the most convenient theme of patriotism and Indian culture resulting in a sudden drop of tempo in the play There are many such examples in every play of Prasad Only when the poet collaborates with the dramatist, we have some of the best specimens of Hindi drama—simple and flowery, dialogues or soliloquies excelling both in depth and range

Quite a lot has been said about the language of Prasad s dramas They can be summed up on two points (i) his language much too ornate and (ii) his language does not mould itself according to the character But these conclusions have been drawn on the basis of prose employed by Prasad in arriving at such a superficial examination He has deliberately chosen the Gupta period for his major plays Naturally he had to avoid a language which would not have given a sense of sophistication He had to lean heavily on Sanskrit What is wrong with his approach? The poet has set before himself a particular task and chosen his tool accordingly Why should we question either the selection of the task or, for that matter the tool? For us, the reader or the viewer what really matters is the effectiveness of the tools and the degree of success he has achieved in his task From this point of view, he has succeeded admirably One can quote any number of lines I have deliberately chosen two quotations mentioned above and compared them with parallel lines from Shakespeare to underline the degree of success Nobody in his sanity would question as to why Shakespeare used such language as to be or not to be in *Hamlet* and such high sounding lines as mutitudinous seas incarnacine in *Macbeth* The dramatic requirements were different and the author chose his tools for maximum impact *Hamlet* points to the fundamental question and the lines are as simple as a mantra *Macbeth* is obsessed with the idea of murder and the enormity of his crime is admirably brought out by the high sounding words

So far as the question of change in the language pattern according to the characters is concerned one must be clear about what is the meaning of language pattern in a drama? Is it the selection of words from the same vocabulary ? If so the criticism about Prasad s plays may hold good But in a drama the dialogue is meant to be spoken by a certain character The character has been sharply defined The words acquire a definite colour when spoken by a certain character 'You fool can be said by a friend a foe a teacher a parent, or a lover And every time it will have a different

colour and flavour The pattern of language, in cold print remains the same and yet it is not the same I have undertaken a simple exercise a number of times I have tried to visualise the lines of Devasena spoken by Vijaya, simple lines that can be juxtaposed For instance can one visualise these lines of Devasena spoken by Vijaya— Have you seen a lonely Parijat tree on a mound in the morning of autumn? It does not sound in unison with other trees ' Vijaya could not have spoken these lines for these are the lines of a very quiet personality sharp analytical and yet confident in a non aggressive way Vijaya is like a piece of sweet dripping with the juice You touch and you will have to lick your fingers Whereas Devasena is like a grape You are aware of the juice encased within but it does not drip You do not have to lick your fingers These erroneous notions have only cropped up from the fact that Prasad s plays have not been staged They have been read and these peculiarities of a medium like drama have not been taken into account

While evaluating Prasad as a dramatist one should be prepared to overlook the two tendencies of the dramatist—patriotism and intrusion of the poet at awkward moments As depicted in the play Chandragupta is basically a political personality Other facets are not sufficiently developed to enable a better understanding of the person There are a few soliloquies here and there but the problems of the individual have not been sharply focused in the play

I for one rank *Skandagupta* as one of the classics of Hindi literature I can certainly prophesy and want to see the day when a translation of *Skandagupta* in English will be presented and the public in general, and critics in particular will wake up to find this play ranking with the best plays of the world

Jayashankar Pr ısad and Some Other World Poets

PROF R C PRASAD

Though for quite some time Jayashankar Prasad s reputation as a great Hindi epic poet was clouded by hostile criticism which made his partisans either apologetic or militant, the situation is fast changing and a school of critics more receptive to a poetry charged with epic sublimity and high moral purpose has emerged to re exa mine his ideas modes and intentions They now read him for the sensuous intensity reminiscent of Keats, for the feeling of kinship with nature that often brings to mind Wordsworth, or for his optimism and myth making qualities like the ones Shelley possessed He is looked upon as a poet of the Indian Renaissance or of the Hindi romantic school and as one who, through his allegorical epic, exhorted his countrymen to unify and organize their sensibility by unifying their sense perceptions mind and heart by eliminating all mutual differences and by reconciling materialism and spiritualism, attachment and renunciation When action, desire and wisdom unify all sense of alienation disappears, paving the way for cosmic harmony and bliss

Although Prasad s *Kamayani* has some of the most pronounced qualities of the epic his poem has nothing Homeric about it, nothing resembling the Wrath of Achilles or the homecoming of Odysseus after the fall of Troy except its action which like Homer s in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, is serious dignified, and of considerable magnitude The story of Manu s evolution beginning with his encounter with Shraddha and ending in his separation from her and then his humiliation and final redemption has like the Homeric epics a definite beginning and an equally definite end and the various events portrayed in it follow one another in orderly fashion one leading naturally or inevitably to the next It has like the Greek epics again organic unity and is impersonal in tone, though it is for the most part more lyrical than dramatic One of the most fundamental differences between the Greek and the Indian epic is that the latter being a literary epic was designed to be read while the poems of Homer were composed to be recited to an audience Though Prasad s subject matter is derived from Vedic

literature and is in this sense traditional the poem is not made up of word groups or phrases traditional to oral poetry as all original or genuine epics are

Though Prasad has little cultural or spiritual affinity with Virgil they both tell legendary stories—Virgil of Rome s legendary founder and Prasad of the legendary Manu and their reputation as poets endures not only for the music and diction of their verse and for their skill in constructing intricate poems on the grand scale but because they embodied in their poetry aspects of experience and behaviour of permanent significance To many readers however both were escapists Virgil making literary excursions into the idyllic pastoral world of Arcadia based on the Greek poet Theocritus Prasad into the Vedic past If in his *Elcogues* Virgil conveys in liquid song the idealized situations of an imaginary world in which shepherds sing in the sunshine of their simple joys and mute their sorrows (whether for unhappy love or untimely death) in a formalised pathos Prasad expresses in delicate lyrics the primordial and passionate reactions of the earliest man to his first encounter with woman Both Virgil and Prasad however bring their poems into touch with the real world either directly or by means of allegory, and thus give a new direction to the genres in which they embodied their themes Prasad like Virgil expresses a noble vision in his *Kamayani* but the real greatness of his poem is due to his awareness (again like Virgil s) of the private, as well as the public aspects of human life While the Roman poem sets the achievements and aspirations of the giant organization of Roman governmental rule in tension with the frustrated hopes and sufferings of individuals *Kamayani* sets faith in tension with the intellect and dogma with science and proposes for the salutary evolution of mankind a union of the two

It is interesting to note that though Shraddha is no Dido she recalls the Queen of Carthage by the amount of sympathy she wins from the readers Both Shraddha and Dido are presented as women in love and both are rejected by their lovers Like Aeness continuing his wanderings in spite of the vows he has sworn and Dido s pathetic pleas that he remain with her Manu abandons the lovesick woman and wanders away Like Dido she too is one of the most wronged women in all literature and like her again she has beauty charm and character Here the comparison ends While the Queen of Carthage sacrificed her character to the whims of

Venus and on the pretext of burning the love tokens which Aeneas gave her, killed herself after the latter s departure, Shraddha is faithful to the end and though she laments her betrayal, does not kill herself

Some of the episodes in the Indian epic call to mind many a Virgilian touch, especially the Roman poet's exploration of the problems of suffering and the pathos of the human situation, and his portrayal of such characters as Turnus Just as Virgil allows Turnus to win much sympathy even in his defeat, so does Prasad allow Manu considerable sympathy in spite of the latter's barbarity Like Virgil's Aeneas Manu endures and continues to his goal his devotion to Shraddha like Aenea s to duty (*pietas*), prevails in the end

Of the limited number of other world poets whose epic sublimity amplitude and profundity somewhat resemble those of Prasad, only Dante Spenser, Milton Keats and Shelley are the most important Like the *Commedia, Kamayani* is also an allegory which cannot be easily classified as epic or grouped under any other known form because there was nothing like it before in Hindi literature and nothing written since is at all comparable to it Just as Dante made his poem Prasad made his *Kamayani*, substance form and langu age and though no man invents anything without drawing upon minds that have preceded his *Kamayani* is the original creation of its poet [1] Both Dante and Prasad created their materials and at the same time summed up all the world of their times As Dante goes to view the dead he has all history and biography behind him and he retells or suggests in wonderfully compact verses the stories of sinners of all degrees of the almost good and of the blessed as Prasad goes to explore the human consciousness and not the macrocosm as the epic poets normally do, he has all human psy chology and modern scientific achievements behind him and he has recounted in extremely symbolical and multi pronged picture sque verses the story of Manu s journey to Manasarovar which is but emblematic of the journey of human consciousness to the lake of bliss [3] It is these stories which give the *Commedia* and *Kamayani* their extraordinary human interest But if the ruling emotion in the former is compassion that in the latter is 'atmaras or maharas also called the aesthetic sentiment of bliss (anandaras)

It is no inconsistency to say that both Dante and Prasad knew how to relieve the sufferings of the sinners and the ecstasies of the

happy If the emotional power of single passages for example the famous fifth canto of Hell in the *Commedia*, the story of Paolo and Francesca is unsurpassed in European narrative poetry, the sheer beauty of the canto of Modesty (Lajja) and of the reunion of the three symbolic planets in the canto Mystery (Rahasya) is unsur passed in Hindi narrative poetry Still more striking is the similarity between Virgil of the *Commedia* and Ida of *Kamayani* This may be said to lie rather in the kindred nature of their role, for both represent the intellect which refuses to go beyond a certain limit The part played by Beatrice in the *Divine Comedy* is also somewhat similar to that played by Shraddha in *Kamayani* Just as Dante forsakes Beatrice and wanders away in the company of Virgil similarly Manu abandons Shraddha and follows Ida to the city of Sarasvat Just as Virgil inspires Dante to return to heaven so does Ida inspire Manu to return to Kailash Like Dante s vision of the ascent of Jesus along with Virgin Mary we have in *Kamayani* Manu's vision of Shiv s cosmic dance by tearing asunder the veil of darkness like Beatrice dispelling Dante s doubts and misgivings we have Shraddha leading Manu on the roadway to bliss by overcoming all hurdles and dispelling all doubts Just as Beatrice introduces Dante to God s divine light to beatitude Shraddha become instrumental in helping Manu attain the divine light of Eternal Bliss Shraddha's role in destroying Manu s egotism and his sense of distinction between the personal and the imperso-nal in the canto of Bliss (Anand) is reminiscent of Dante s experie nce of the unity of the human soul and God attained through Beatrice s divine compassion and grace There is something mun dane as well as spiritual about both Beatrice and Shraddha As a worldly creature Shraddha is Manu s spouse but spiritually she is more than an earthly woman she is the source of Manu s abiding faith and unending bliss the smybol of the divinity in men and an unswerving guide

Probably the best way for a modern reader to realise how much of resemblance there may be between Prasad and some of the most representative Western poets is to consider the great Hindi epic poet in comparison with two of the greatest of English epic poets Spenser and Milton While any such comparison is sure to walk lame, it would serve to give an excellent idea of the illustrations of the Indian and English poets in the illustrations of their ideas Like Spenser the poet of *Kamayani* possessed what Cole-

ridge called 'a feminine tenderness and almost maidenly purity of feeling and above all a deep moral earnestness which produces a believing sympathy and acquiescence in the reader Like the *Fairie Queene Kamayani* may be said to be one part allegory and nine parts beauty and enjoyment and as Leigh Hunt put it, 'some times an excess of flesh and blood The poetical faculty in both Spenser and Prasad is abundantly and beautifully predominant above every other and diffusion is at once their power and their weakness Their poems have indeed a high moral purpose and their passion for pathos, for the fair the pictorial amounts almost to an infatuation It can also be said of Prasad as it was said of Spenser that there is a pre established harmony between his soul, subject and his verse ' When he means to be weighty and powerful it is strong when he becomes sentimental it languishes in sym pathy when he trembles into pathos it can wail in concert

Spenser and Prasad resemble each other in the blended ingenuity and imperfections of their allegory, in the intense shaping power of their imagination Thus personifications are to them living moving and speaking beings But love to linger in their honeyed sensations as a bee does in the translucent cup of a lily Just as Spenser was a conscious Englishman to his utmost fibre Prasad may be said to have been every inch a true representative of the dawn of the Indian Cultural Renaissance Like Spenser again Prasad can be very prosaic and clumsy unmusical and flat It is for this reason that critics hold that the work of both requires historical extenuation

How far the Indian poet resembles Spenser can be gauged from the following rapturous description in the first canto Anxiety (*Chinta*) of *Kamayani*

All was there of universal glory
Strength and power and infinite joy
Like weltering waves pleasures rolled on
In that prosperity of boundless delight

Name and fame and grandeur danced,
Like radiant rays in all directions
In the flowing currents of seven oceans
In trees and foliage beaming with joy

Spenser is full of such pellucid descriptions one of which can be

cited as an illustration

Much wondred Calidere at this straunge sight,
Whose like before his eye had never seene,
And standing long astonished in spright,
And rapt with pleasaunce wist not what to weene
Whether it were the traine of Beauties Queene,
Or Nymphes or Faeries, or enchaunted show,
With which his eyes mote have deluded beene
Therefore resolving what it was to know
Out of the wood he rose, and toward them did go

But while Spenser has won recognition from even such nations as are not his own Prasad has been the favourite reading of men, mostly lovers of romantic poetry in his own country While the supremacy of Spenser s greatness has been recognized, Prasad s appeal has comparatively been limited for want of proper translation in world languages though very few realise how Miltonic in his themes and sublimity he indeed is The story of Manu and Shraddha is reminiscent of Milton s treatment of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve If Milton s *Paradise Lost* stands with the *Iliad* and Shakespeare s plays, *Kamayani* too stands with *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* Like the English epics *Kamayani* is not only a magnificent poem but also one of the landmarks of history, ' more than the inspirer of art and the glory of a great people If, however Milton s mind holds equal communion with the inspired writers bards or sages of ancient Greece and Rome Prasad s mind communicates with the inspired seers of ancient India The success of both Milton and Prasad depends on their untiring maintenance of an extraordinary elevation Their choice of subject therefore determines the nature of their diction and compels them to maintain dignity and distance by choosing comparisons from ancient history and mythology, or from those great and unfamiliar aspects of nature which repel intimacy When Prasad introduces such archetypal similes as

Like weltering waves pleasures rolled on
In that prosperity of boundless delight

or as

"Name and fame and grandeur danced,
Like radiant rays in all directions '

or even as

Earth like a gasping tortoise, was swaying
Helter-skelter in helpless plight '

We are aware of his consistent care for remoteness and loftiness But while both Prasad and Milton employ figures and comparisons illustrative of concrete objects by concrete objects Milton s similes are, according to Sir Walter Raleigh, historic parallels, whereby the names and incidents of human history are made to elucidate and ennoble the less familiar names and incidents of his prehistoric theme' Prasad seldom uses the extended Homeric simile but he reminds us of Milton s use of the remote comparison or the archetypal simile, the answerable' style of both possesses dignity and flexibility at once an ability to rise to the most sublime heights and at the same time to express all the important shifts in moral attitude It may also be asserted that just as the popular view that Milton in *Paradise Lost* has but one voice and that an organ one is wholly unjustified the well known opinion of the critics of Prasad that in *Kamayani* the poet has but one characteristic style and that a heavily Sanskritized style is quite untenable Both Milton and Prasad were masters of a great variety of styles, simple and ornate plain and complex, Sanskritized or Latinate and homely or familiar But whereas Milton rejected the rhymed stanza Prasad makes it an expressive vehicle and endows it with a flexibility and competence unexcelled by the verse stanzas of other Hindi writers

While it is true that both Milton and Prasad have for their heroes Adam and his Indian counterpart Manu their treatment of the two is essentially different for whereas *Paradise Lost* deals with the unfallen man Prasad s Manu seems from the outset to be a postlapsarian creature full of anxious thoughts and misgivings Moreover Milton s Adam is the first parent while Prasad s Manu is the representative of a race of people tall sturdy and handsome who lived in north India before the Deluge He is obviously the type of the sons of Adam unparadised As a matter of fact the story of Manu seems to begin where that of Adam ends

Both Prasad and Milton find in history and mythology the source for their splendours, but while the story of the creation gives Milton an opportunity for enumerating the kinds and properties of birds, beasts, fishes and reptiles, that of the deluge gives Prasad an excellent opportunity for interiorizing epic events, drawing attention to the shattering of the harmony between desire action and intellect, and showing how chaos and anarchy have been let loose following this breach in the chain of being Prasad, like Milton subscribes to the age old belief in order and hierarchy and regards the dissociation of dogma and culture, politics and science as the greatest bane of modern materialistic civilization [4] When he suggests that religion and culture are divorced from both action and science in our times, he is calling attention to this breach and to the source of the present day reign of violence

Prasad s general descriptions like those of Milton are highly picturesque, but they spend little time on enumeration and detail Just as the mere mention of historic and geographic names rouses all the poet in Milton, the mere mention of nature, or the necessity of a natural simile, rouses all the poet in Prasad

Her face was pale like Ketaki flower,
Her eyes were filled with longing love
Slimming was shrouded in her shyness
Her body was like a quivering creeper!

Shraddha turned round and beheld Ida
She was like the line of a morose figure
Like an orb of the moon eclipsed by *Rahu*,
Like sorrow encircled by line of poison

Here Prasad has maintained dignity and elevation by introducing simple integral similes from nature and not by transforming proper names into something more melodious and unfamiliar or by choosing comparisons from ancient history and mythology or from unfamiliar things in nature It is Milton and not Prasad who takes the apportunity of his digressions to display his learning and to introduce sonorous proper names which is one of the games he is said to be specially good at

Both Milton and Prasad use the method of suspense Milton lets us enter into Satan s state of mind in a soliloquy and then lets us

proceed with him on his journey to the border of Eden and then onwards within Eden to the enclosed garden of Paradise Prasad carries us along from the outset into the mind of Manu who like Adam in the garden of Eden is all alone after the devastating de luge The way in which Shraddha is described when she meets Manu reminds us of Milton s description of Eve when she meets Adam (in her face excuse/Came Prologue and Apologie to prompt) Both Prasad and Milton appear to have conceived these scenes in dramatic terms But whereas Milton s Adam decides to die with Eve Manu deserts Shraddha and loses himself in the mire of lust passion and sensuality In one respect however, Adam s action is analogous to Manu s for Adam s decision to die with Eve is also a transgression of God s law and represents a failure of human love Manu s desertion of Shraddha as well as Adam s re solve not to abandon Eve is an index of what human passions and relationships may do to us if we follow them exclusively In Dante s scheme hell is where such adulterous lovers go unless they repent before they die

It would be interesting to compare the portrait of Manu with that of Adam and to establish the essential differences between Prasad s and Milton s protagonists, as well as between Prasad and Milton Prasad s Manu as we saw is already a fallen man occupied eternally as it were with musing within his mind

> Then what? Should I still aspire to live?
> What should I do with prolonged existence?
> Oh Providence! tell when I should die
> Bearing the burden of immortal sorrow?

Such a man in conflict with existence and burdened with immortal sorrow must of course be different from Adam whose

> *fair large Front and Eye sublime declar d*
> Absolute rule and Hyacinthin Locks
> Round from his pasted forelock manly hung
> Clustering

Adam is of far nobler shape erect and tall Godlike erect with native Honour clad Man is pensive self absorbed given to pon dering deep

There beside the blazing fire
Like a living austerity dwelling
Amidst the autumnal falling leaves.

Though emerging safe from the Deluge he is an ever brooding Hamlet a living monument of Melancholy, only intermittently aware of the delights of the world and beaming full of strength and vigour, like the radiant sun glowing in mid horizon If lust is one of the first consequences of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* it is obvious that Manu is fallen 'a blazing meteor perplexed a helpless creature whose 'life has become a doleful mystery and who helplessly wanders in the utter void

The more one reads Milton s and Prasad s epics the greater the awareness of their difference grows as it does when we compare Prasad with Goethe *Kamayani* with *Faust* And yet it is not difficult to establish their essential affinity for both Prasad and Goethe are lyric poets of the first order they are both the authors of works which bear to modern man 'yesterday today and for a long tomorrow the relation that the *Divine Comedy* bore to the man of the fourteenth century Both *Kamayani* and *Faust* express us—our age, [illegible] moral adventure Like Goethe s letters gnomic poems, sayings in verse and prose Prasad s lyrics critical writings and plays constitute a wisdom literature of constant significance in which the basic problem and the dilemma of the modern scientific period is creatively commented on in terms which find an echo in every instructed mind But while those who prefer moral energy to moral formalism world federation to international rivalries a cultivation of essential as opposed to mythical values in literature life and politics will turn to Goethe those who prefer eternal joy and bliss to abnormal sensuality spiritual satisfaction to carnal pleasure true dedication to lust a conscientious and moral life like Shraddha s to a life of material prosperity (Ida s) and unbridled lustfulness (Manu s) will draw endless inspiration from the writings of Prasad Just as Goethe packs the inspiration the wisdom of his incomparable mind in *Faust* Prasad packs the whole story of evolution from the union of Shraddha and Manu the wisdom of his incomparable epic poet in *Kamayani* one of the most sophisticated [illegible] in the world

A look at Goethe s story will reveal the essential similarity and difference between *Faust* and *Kamayani* Faust is a [illegible]

thirsts for life He knows that salvation is not through theories but through experience He throws himself, under the guidance of Mephistopheles, the spirit of negation and of evil, into the world of living experience He tries sensual love, power and vulgar gaiety All these experiences however, leave him unsatisfied He finds an ultimate satisfaction in the simplest, most practical service to his fellow men But this, too is but a step in his striving this, too, is not the goal The road itself is the goal life is its own end and must justify itself from within, perfection is beyond our reach Thus our highest achievement is a noble striving, a tireless creative living

This brief outline of the story of *Faust* reveals some of the ele ments which are present by a curious coincidence also in *Kamayani* Prasad like Goethe is out to search for the meaning of life, or, rather for the source that gives this meaning Both help the reader to discover the totality of his life—a life of universal love and brotherhood ' Both deal with man s desire to transcend his limit ations, his search for answers to the eternal questions of the mean ing of life and the universe The breadth of vision and the gran deur of poetic expression as both concern themselves with this universal problem are peculiar to them and are, in the main the measure of their greatness

It must however, be admitted that *Kamayani* is not a Hindi ver sion of Goethe s poem While the growth and development of *Faust* correspond to the intellectual growth of its creator those of *Kamayani* do not Many critics have made studies of Goethe s own life and the progress of *Faust* to show how closely parallel they run and to what extent *Faust* may be considered autobiographical No such studies of Prasad s life and the progress of *Kamayani* are either desirable or even possible The story of the Great Deluge has nothing autobiographical about it except that it dramatizes the story of 'the universal and quintessential Man and on a formal plane crystallises the experiences and consolidates the achievements of the playwright the poet and the story teller thus fusing all the three into a single intensity [5]

W B Yeats once said of Keats ' His art is happy but who knows his mind? As one contemplates the tragic career of this great lyri cal Hindi poet, one is compelled to ask the same question to com pare his *Ansu* with its Western parallel Coleridge s Dejection An Ode Both Prasad and Coleridge were philosophically gifted and both are equally concerned about the principle of Joy, as the very

basis of creative life Both of them fail to reach that bedrock of passion where this principle of Joy can really take over Coleridge could not reach that bedrock of passion because of the passivity of his character in the face of suffering while Prasad failed to reach it not because of any passivity in his character as such, but primarily because of the inherent passivity or quitescence of the philosophy itself Coleridge escaped into philosophy because the state of his nerves made him seek an escape from the emotionally charged life of a poet, because his unhappiness had cut him off from that emotional life Prasad on the other hand, did not need to escape into philosophy His philosophy itself was the living context of his experience as well as the inescapable backdrop of that experience '[6]

The link between the style of Prasad s poems and that of the poems of the Western romantics is sufficiently apparent, being romantics they all are full of 'anti present day ism' which lends a characteristic romantic flavour to their work Like the English romantics Prasad is subjective, tending to get away from the ordinariness of the ordinary universe and toward nature and the exploratory development of the individual, away from the crude, the ludicrous and the ugly and toward the sublime

Prasad s place in world literature can be best determined by comparing him with Shelley, his *Kamayani* with Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* In structure the Hindi poem is as carefully wrought as Shelley's poem, in both the stress is less on action than on revelation, and since both deal with a timeless event in dramatic time, the ordinary rules of dramatic organization have comparatively little relevance to them *Ansu* and *Kamayani* often remind the reader of Shelley s lyrics of their quality of lightness without sacrifice of dignity their love of sea and space imagery etc Both Prasad and Shelley were concerned with moral reformation but they could appeal only to the esoteric few The allegorical structure of *Kamayani* the poet s moral concern, his blending of classical learning with pure lyricism are no less Shelleyan

Its inherent mastery reminds one of Milton and Dante Iqbal and Tagore If these poets command of language extorts our admiration, Prasad s admirable lyricism, his consummate fusion of myth and reality, fact and fiction evoke our commendation But Prasad goes far ahead of Iqbal in one major respect he does not allow his poetry to be dominated by theological dogmatism Kalidas,

Dante Milton Goethe and Tagore– all had the same universalism of spirit and the same cosmopolitanism of outlook which enabled them to harmonize the seeming divergences of life into the fundamental unity of the phenomena around us While Iqbal falls short of this ideal and does not therefore rank with these immortals *Prasad by virtue of his universalism belongs to them—to the tradition of the world poets* Like Tagore's work, Prasad s too is ' one with the Divine Eros of all ages and religions though it does not like Tagore s, ever lose its Hindu differentiate Both Tagore and Prasad abandon the outer world and turn to the depths of their own hearts to find in the words of Professor V Lenney 'a new estimate of man s relation to the world and to his God In masterly verses both Tagore and Prasad communicate their thoughts to the reader who (to quote Professor Lenney again) experiences a foretaste of the communion of man and God

Thus Prasad occupies a place of honour in the galaxy of world poets Tagore and Iqbal in India Dante Milton ond Goethe in the West

REFERENCES

[1]See *Kamayani* aur Adhunik Hindi Mahakavya in Kalyanamal Lodha (ed) *Kamayani* (New Delhi 1976) pp 102 109
[2]Dr Nagendra *Kamayani ke Adhyayan ki Samasyayen* (Delhi 19 5) pp 17
[3]*Ibid* pp 58
[4]*Ibid* pp 17
[5]R C Shah *Jayashan ar Prasad* (Delhi Sahitya Akademi 1978) pp 67
[6]*Ibid* pp 32